First printing - by DS Litho Lithographic printer, tel/fax: (01869) 320687

Palmtop

The journal for Psion Series 3 and 3a users

Issue 7

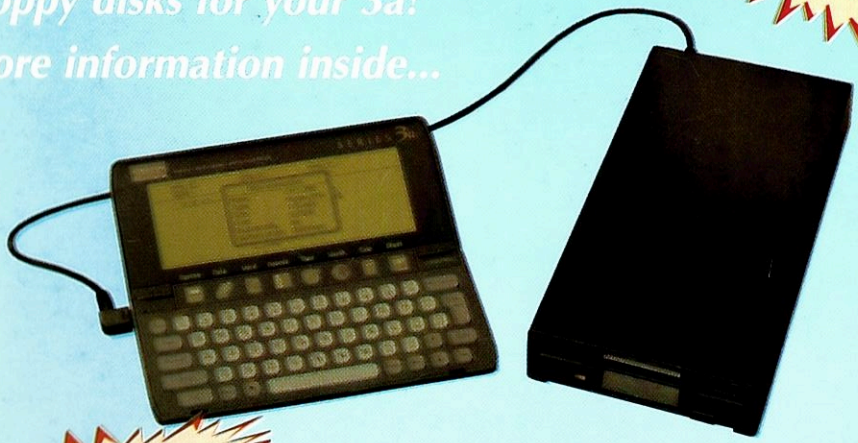
Bimonthly

New enhanced layout!

The Purple Cyclone...

Floppy disks for your 3a!

more information inside...



Biggest issue ever!

Hardware feature...

Palmtop exclusive!

Build your own

PC SSD drive

Contents

Issue 7
(Volume 2, issue 1)

14 **A Closer Look**
Eight more product reviews including the latest appearances on the scene...

31 **Justify my Psion**
Stephen Murgan looks at ways to make your Psion pay its way

35 **Programmers' Workshop**
The last part of Andrew Baldwin's 'Build an Application' series

41 **Build your own SSD drive!**
An exclusive *Palmtop* construction project

47 **A good read?**
Pete Sipple looks at the latest books for 3a owners

51 **Working with WORD**
Getting to grips with the 3a word processor—part 2 of our beginner's guide

55 **Programmers' Surgery**
Rick "The Doc" Andrews continues our regular feature for fledgling programmers

59 **Psion Around The World**
This time we look at Psion in Australia and the South Pacific

61 **"On The Net"**
Pete Sipple does some more snooping on the Internet

67 **The Bible on your 3a**
Steve Litchfield shows you how to squeeze it all in!

70 **Getting personal with Purple**
An interview with Purple Software

76 **Hints & Tips**
Those little things you always wanted to know but were frightened to ask...

79 **Psurfing the Net**
Pete Sipple explains what the big wide Internet has to offer Psion users

85 **The Psion Reference**
Our brand new reference section—useful information and product details

Palmtop
The journal for Psion Series 3 and 3a users

Palmtop is...

Steve Clack - Editor

Pete Sipple - Associate Editor

Thanks...

...To all the contributors whose names appear within the magazine, particularly Andrew Baldwin for his programming articles, Rosemary for her administrative help and Paul Roberts for proofing and general assistance. Thanks also to Chris Love at Clove Technology for various contributions and supply of review material, and to all those who have kindly supplied their products for evaluation.

Address

All requests for subscriptions or back issues and any comments or criticisms regarding the content of *PALMTOP* should be directed to the editor at the following address:

Steve Clack
25 Avocet Way
Bicester
Oxon OX6 0YN
ENGLAND

Tel: +44 (0)1869 249287 or fax 246043
or: e-mail 100602.3723@compuserve.com
or: *palmtop@aol.com*

Submissions

Any contributions of material published within the pages of *PALMTOP* (excluding 'On The Net') will earn the author a minimum of one free issue added to their subscription. If you wish to write feature articles for the magazine then please contact the editor to discuss your ideas.

Back Issues

Back issues of *PALMTOP* are available at one sixth of the annual subscription price per issue. Just send payment in the usual way, stating which issues you require.

Subscriptions

PALMTOP is available by subscription only from the address given above, price £24 within the UK, £27 in Europe and £33 worldwide. Price covers 6 issues and all postage (and airmail costs for European/worldwide subscriptions). VAT is not payable on *PALMTOP*.

Payment for subscriptions or back issues can be made by cheque or Money Order (payable to '*PALMTOP*') in UK FUNDS ONLY. Payments can also be made using VISA, MASTERCARD, EUROCARD, DELTA, JCB, ACCESS and SWITCH cards. Please call, fax, post or e-mail your card details.

General

PALMTOP acknowledges that some of the names referred to within the magazine are registered trademarks, and they are given for information purposes only, with no commercial interests.

Editorial

The past month or so has seen the biggest ever changes to this magazine since it began just over a year ago. I am now running *Palmtop* as a full-time business, and over the past few weeks have been in the process of implementing all of the production enhancements you see in this issue.

The four-fold increase in the printing resolution has enabled the more effective use of photographs within the magazine, and the addition of the new 'Reference Section' from page 85 onwards will allow us to give a more comprehensive information service than ever before. The new advertising section rounds off the new *Palmtop* with a service requested by numerous readers over the past months: it will help everyone to learn more about the latest commercial offerings for Psion computers, and will give shareware authors a cost effective place to advertise their programs.

The editorial content continues to expand too, with this issue containing exactly twice the number of pages of the first issue. This trend will continue, with issue 8 weighing in at an estimated 104 pages, with more articles than ever before.

I am acutely aware that every issue to date has been at least a week or two late (sometimes more), and that this problem needs to be addressed. My recent move to full-time employment on *Palmtop* will obviously have an enormous impact on the effort I can now expend on the production of it, and my partner, Rosemary, will be joining me full-time from the beginning of September.

Pete Sipple has spent an enormous amount of time and effort contributing to all aspects of *Palmtop* since it began (all in his spare time, and despite living more than 100 miles away from the *Palmtop* office), and I'm proud to say that Pete has now agreed to become Associate Editor for the magazine.

With all the above changes I have now compiled a ***firm*** production schedule for the next six issues of *Palmtop*, and the latest distribution dates are given below:

Issue 8 - 5th September 1996
Issue 9 - 28th October 1996
Issue 10 - 20th December 1996
Issue 11 - 17th February 1997
Issue 12 - 14th April 1997
Issue 13 - 9th June 1997

Steve Clack - Editor
20th June 1996

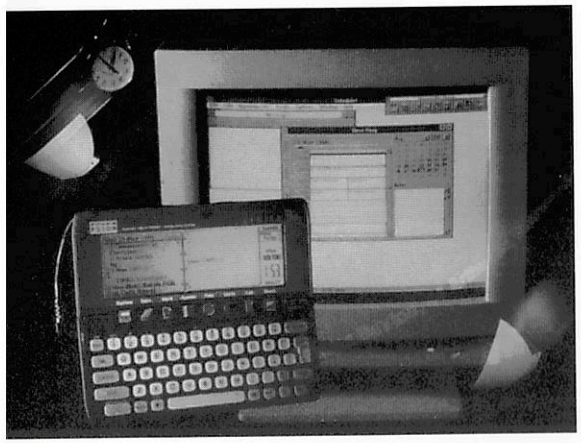
Palmtop News

The latest hot gossip on what's happening in the Psion world

Palmtop changes

Please note that the fax number for *Palmtop* has now changed from 249287 to 246043 (the telephone number remains unchanged). The preferred e-mail contact address is now either *100602.3723@compuserve.com*, or alternatively *palmtop@aol.com*. We also have a new World Wide Web site (see elsewhere in this issue for more details) at the following address:

http://members.aol.com/palmtop



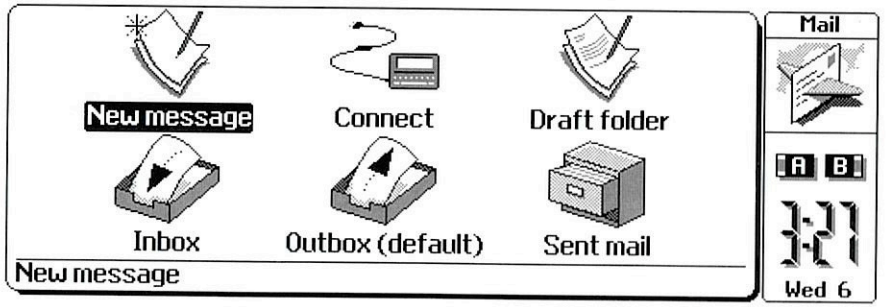
The *Palmtop* telephone number is now manned during normal office hours and you can always leave a message on the answering machine at other times.

Psion Agenda Synchroniser

Psion will shortly be releasing a new agenda synchronisation package to allow two-way updating between the 3a's own AGENDA software and PC-based Microsoft Schedule+ or Lotus Organiser. The software is due for release in July at an expected retail price of £45 including VAT.

Widget Agenda Link

Widget Software will be releasing a major update to their own Agenda Link software in July. Look for reviews of both Psion and Widget products in the next issue of *Palmtop*.



Psion launch PsiMail

Corporate users can now access email from Microsoft Exchange/MS Mail and Lotus cc:Mail systems via their Series 3a and a modem.

PsiMail consists of a client application running on the 3a and gateway software to run on a PC connected to the company network. The gateway utilises MAPI to communicate with the host email system and will handle email attachments as well as plain messages.

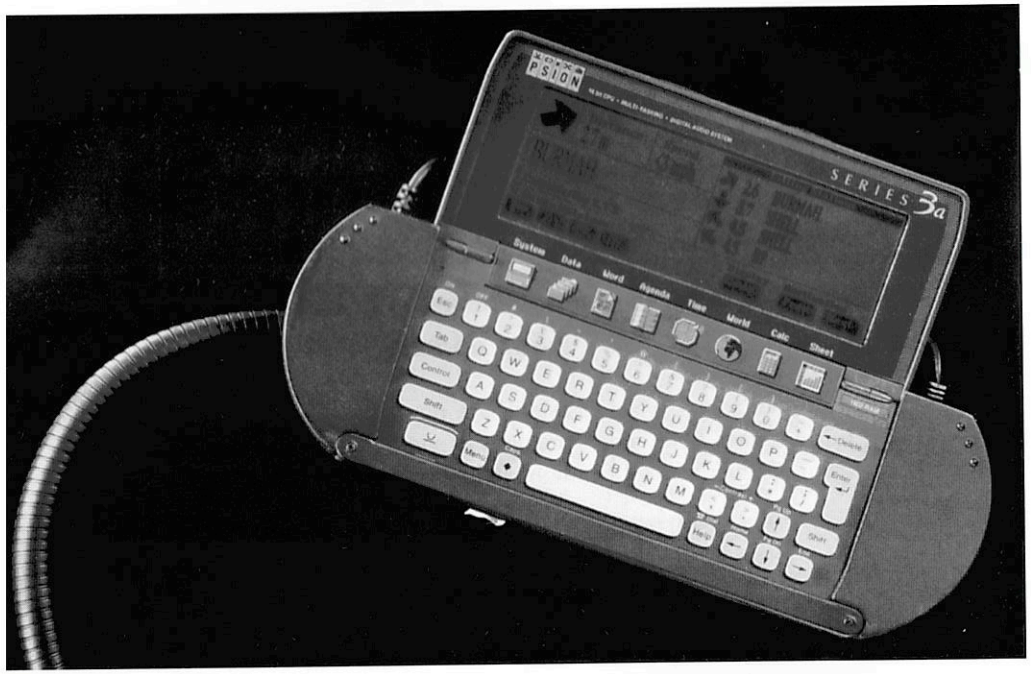
Full Internet mail is promised by Psion for later this year, allowing all remaining mail users to pick up their mail on the 3a.

Psion address change

Psion have now moved their main UK premises as part of their ongoing expansion, and their telephone numbers have changed accordingly:

Psion UK PLC	tel: (0990) 134224 fax: (0990) 561046
Customer Services	tel: (0990) 143050 fax: (0990) 561046
Technical support	tel: (0990) 143061

The '0990' numbers have been implemented as a precautionary measure to avoid another change if Psion move again in the future. These numbers will be 'portable' to any UK location, and are charged at standard long distance rates from anywhere inside the UK.



In-car 3a navigation system

Positioning International Ltd (tel: 01403 276811) have developed an in-car navigation system based on the Series 3a computer and a GPS (Global Positioning System) receiver. The new system, *Findit*, uses the constellation of 21 earth-orbiting satellites placed by the U.S. government to pinpoint your location anywhere in mainland Britain to an accuracy of around 100 metres. When used in a car *Findit* gives the speed of your vehicle, estimated time to destination, together with local information on nearby towns, landmarks, services, etc.

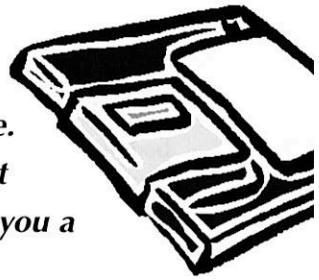
Palmtop will be featuring an article about this exciting technology in the near future.

The Mobile Pages Challenge

London-based Mobile Software have issued a 'challenge' for any personal or corporate user with database requirements. Mobile Pages is the name for their suite of products that allow storage of information from other computer systems directly onto the Series 3a.

The 'Challenge' invites users to submit samples of their business or personal data, and in return Mobile Software will build a ready-compressed database for use on the 3a and return it free of charge. See page 91 for further details.

Shareware Shorts



New shareware for the Series 3 and 3a is being released daily, and there's something for everyone. Pete Sipple takes a brief look at some of the latest programs to have made an appearance and gives you a rundown of what's new on the scene...

Off-line Internet Surfing

Websurf v1.5, by French software author Arnaud Weil, is an off-line HTML file viewer: In other words it allows you to view *World Wide Web* pages from your Psion. At the moment there's no way to connect to the Internet and view pages directly, but the current software is the first step. Web pages downloaded from the Internet can be viewed, and links to other pages can be followed. Particularly useful for large documents or information lifted from the net that you want to keep with you on the move. Promised by the author are the ability to print a page to most printers, decoding of GIF pictures and support for HTML tables.

WEBSRF15.ZIP 40K

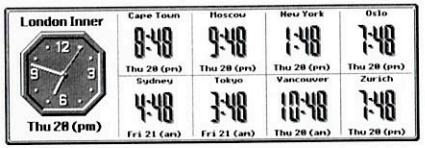
[×] Palmtop Magazine
Contents of previous Palmtop issues
Palmtop is a bimonthly magazine for Psion Series 3/3a users. It's an A5 magazine packed full of Psion news, reviews and information.
Each issue includes details of new products, Psion news, readers' letters, reviews, Programmers' Workshop, 'On the Net', hints and tips, shareware news, plus much much
Contents
A B
Sun 16

What the *Palmtop* web site looks like on a Series 3a

Where in the World?

World Time v0.06B by Steve Godfrey is a small utility that displays 8 clocks for cities around the world, together with a large clock for the current home city. The times are set from the World database and the program allows you to set one alarm for a time in another city, useful if you arrange to phone somebody in another part of the world at a certain time in their local time.

WLDTIME6.ZIP (7K)



'Help' yourself!

Shareware authors may want to take a look at 'Helpedit'. This is a new Windows program for creating Psion Help resource files. An internal tool used by Psion, now released for us all.

HELPEDIT.ZIP (98K)

Project Planning

ProPoc V2.04 has been released in a both a 'lite' and a 'professional' version. This project planning software manages up to 15 concurrent projects and 15 resources with resource levelling. The powerful ProPoc package includes customisable tables for viewing and printing and full help files. Amongst the additional features to be found in the professional version are AGENDA import/export, Baselines, Bottleneck analysis, Cash flow analysis, Filters, HyperPoc link, and MPX import/export.

PROPOP.ZIP (174K) and PROPOL.ZIP (115K)

You can run, but you cannot hide

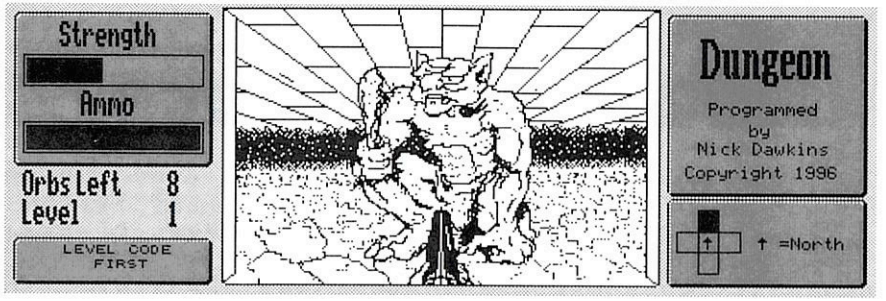
Dungeon v1.32 was released in May. The object of this Doom-like game is to stroll around a maze on the hunt for orbs, shooting baddies on the way. Once laden with orbs, you can teleport up to the next level. There are twenty levels to keep you busy, with added extras for users who register. Nice use of graphics, but... Growl... look out behind you!

DUN1-32.ZIP (49K)

Released since the last issue...

- **SnapShot!** takes a log of all of the files on your Series 3 at one point in time. Later, you can take a second log and 'SnapShot!' will remove any files which have been added since the first 'shot'. Great for folk who experiment with installing and removing shareware.

  SNAPSHOT.ZIP (12K)



Run, or you're DOOM'ed!

- **JBDial** is another utility from prolific shareware author John Boyce. This simple utility will use a modem (if connected) or speaker to 'bring' in phone numbers from other applications, and then act as an auto-dialler.

  JBDIAL.ZIP (13K)

- **Unzip** v1.50 for S3/S3a—Latest version of the unzipper program needed to de-archive compressed software.

  S3UZ150L.ZIP (35K)

- **Notepad** v6.02 is the newest version of the popular project management software. Many new updates, plus improvements to the user interface. Also available in a 'lite' version.

  NOTE602.ZIP (196K) & NPLITE.ZIP (123K)

- **ReadCIS** v1.6.1 is the latest version of the CompuServe off-line reader. You may also want to try WebCIS, a web browser add-on.

  READCIS.ZIP (79K) & WEBCIS.ZIP (28K)

- A new computerised opponent, 'Diana' has been added to Matt Millar's latest version of **Backgammon**.

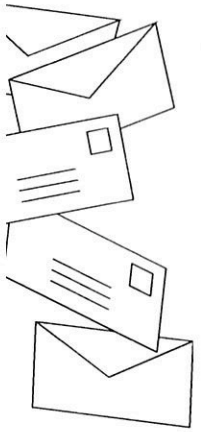
  BG181.ZIP (46K)

- Yet another update to Steve Litchfield's mammoth **Mapper** software, with more towns and various new overlays. Now up to 4.2!

  MAPA42.ZIP, MAPB42, MAPC42...

- Steve Litchfield's at it again, with version 2.5 of his mini presentation graphics program, **Slide**. This version now supports bulleted points and tiled backgrounds.

  SLID25.ZIP (38K)



Readers' Letters

The author of the most interesting letter submitted for issue 8 will receive a leather Series 3/3a case!

PRIZE LETTER - Robert Sander wins a free case for his observations on the negative influence of computer technology...

The insidious brain drain?

Dear Palmtop

Although products like the Psion are extremely useful, they do have an effect on their user's short-term memory. Just like the introduction of the calculator into everyday life reduced peoples' abilities to do mental arithmetic, computers are also having an effect. I was never particularly good at remembering things before I bought my Psion, but now the only thing I bother remembering is to look at my Psion. Unfortunately, even after I've looked at it I forget all the things I had to do so quickly (I'm probably not paying attention anymore) that I have to look at it again shortly afterwards. Apart from being worrying, it looks pretty ridiculous to anyone who doesn't have the same problem, i.e. has a *working* short-term memory!

Is this a universal problem? What are the experiences of other Psion users with respect to this problem? Are there any remedies to revive our poor short-term memories or should we just let it die? Is there any psychological research into what will become a more normal state of being in our society (was there any research into the calculator problem?)

There are many issues surrounding the ways in which this technology is, and will, affect our lives. It may make interesting reading. Maybe you could consider it as a column in *Palmtop*?

Robert Sander
Brentford, Middlesex

I imagine a few heads nodding in agreement to this one Robert. I too remember the days when I simply committed telephone numbers and other snippets of frequently-used information to memory. Now I habitually enter such things into my Psion instead—never taking the trouble to memorise them. There's no doubt that all these wonderful productivity aids are making us lazy. I guess the question is whether they are doing *just* that, or are they more importantly allowing us to focus on more weighty things? - Ed.

More brain drain?

Dear Palmtop

Having been a user of conventional computers for some years I recently decided that a 2Mb Psion 3a with its instant boot-up would be a suitable way to provide additional access to a variety of data normally kept in my PC's database and spreadsheet. Having bought the machine I also began to use the AGENDA application as a replacement for my trusty filofax.

As with all computers the Psion is good at storing and retrieving information, often more conveniently than with traditional paper-based systems.

Having said that, it's advisable to keep the men in white coats away from your front door. If you've made an alarm entry in Agenda to remind yourself to blow your nose before leaving for work then I would suggest looking in the bathroom mirror. You may just be able to make out a large neon sign over your head which says 'NERD'. In these cases I normally recommend removing the batteries from your Psion for a few days.

After this you may realise that paper still has certain advantages:

1. It's robust. You can drop it, drive over it, and it'll probably still work.
2. It doesn't need batteries.
3. It's clear and easy to see. Good for illustrating the 'Broad Concept'.
4. You can tear bits off and give them to people.
5. It's far more romantic than e-mail. You have direct contact with the stuff—not just a representation on screen.

Despite all this I couldn't imagine doing without computers, or using a typewriter to write reports and buying a gallon of correction fluid to fix mistakes.

Clearly, the most obvious advantage of the Psion is its sheer portability. Anyone thinking of buying one who doesn't really need that characteristic should buy a second hand PC or Macintosh for the same sort of cash.

So, in summary the Psion is proving very useful—though I'm keeping an eye out for that neon sign every time I shave!

Richard Kevern
Emsworth, Hampshire

Psion in a Psock?

Dear Palmtop

I'd like to bring to your attention my KLM airlines' 'in-flight sock' which makes such an excellent case for my trusty 3a. It's available in various colours, and though I prefer the dark blue one I've also seen them in grey, light blue and bright red.

Once the sock is folded double with some elastic sewn into the top the 3a is a snug fit and the case offers good protection in the event of rapid descent to *terra firma* from an insecure jacket pocket, and it doesn't add significantly to the bulk of the unit. The case can also be readily adapted to accept the Aiwa pocket modem and all necessary connecting cables, though I prefer to use a second sock for this purpose (This time in bright red to avoid any embarrassing confusion in a quick draw situation).

KLM have recently 'released' a new case for the Aiwa modem which will also accommodate the serial link and parallel link cables. It comes stuffed with two of the old style 3a cases (boringly both in the same colour) and for some reason a toothbrush, small tube of toothpaste, face spray, moisturising cream, clear lipstick, comb—and perhaps most surprisingly a *Batman* mask. I have only found these to be available in selected sections of the flying bars and have yet to see them offered in 'the usual Psion outlets', but I'm sure that if KLM get enough positive feedback from the testers they'll soon be available worldwide.

Steve Cooper
Seoul, South Korea

Psion security issues

Dear Palmtop,

I work in a small office, and since I purchased my first Series 3 some 3 years ago the number of Psion users in the office has grown to 12. During this period 3 machines have either been lost or stolen, never to be seen again.

These missing Psions must be in active use somewhere, and as each unit has a unique serial number it ought to be a simple matter for someone (perhaps Psion themselves) to compile and maintain a register of all lost or stolen units. Any supplier or help desk dealing with Psion matters could, as a matter of routine, ask for a serial number and compare it against the register. If a serial number is flagged in this way then any information on the caller could be passed to the original owner or the Police for further investigation.

What does everyone else think?

Martin Smith
Barnstaple, Devon

PCs taken for granted?

Dear Palmtop

Firstly let me start by congratulating you on such a well put together magazine. As a very new Psion owner and subscriber I have found it a pleasure to read.

However, I have found that you do take for granted that most of your readers also either have access to a PC or have aspirations to! I have a PC myself, but I purchased my 3a partly to free myself from the perils of the IBM-compatible. I would especially like to see an article on 'going online', sending and receiving e-mail, etc., as a series of step-by-step instructions for those with a Series 3a alone.

Christopher Lovejoy-Black
London

In some ways I too dislike making frequent reference to 'other' computers in a Psion-only magazine. The fact is that much of the excellent software available for the Series 3 machines is either shareware or freeware, generally available only either via the Internet or on floppy disks from sources such as *3-Lib*. Those without Internet access (still the vast majority of Psion users) or some kind of 'external' computer therefore tend to run into problems finding a means to get all this great software onto their Psions.

It's true that the majority of *Palmtop* readers have access to some kind of full-sized computer (not necessarily a PC), but I also know that a sizeable number of readers own nothing but a Series 3/3a. The release of the new *Cyclone* drive from Purple Software is a good step forward in making shareware widely available to those without a 'big' computer, and will help to 'free' Psion users in the way you describe.

Access via the Internet is a tricky subject for Psion users at the moment, with CompuServe about to drop its access for ASCII terminals (that means Psion users) later this year. This contributes towards making e-mail access from a 3a harder rather than easier, and further pushes Psion users into mandatory PC-ownership.

The technology is tugging us in both directions at the moment then, and in short there is no easy answer. Rest assured that *Palmtop* will always try to include coverage aimed at getting the most out of your Series 3/3a *alone*, as far as other factors will allow! - Ed.

Calling all French users!

Steve Litchfield, the author of the much-mentioned Mapper-3a/GB, is seriously thinking about Mapper-3a/France, and needs people to help with French overlays. *Si vous habitez en France et vous aimeriez aider, contactez slitchfield@cix.compulink.co.uk!*

A Closer Look...

...at some of the newest & most interesting products available for your Series 3/3a

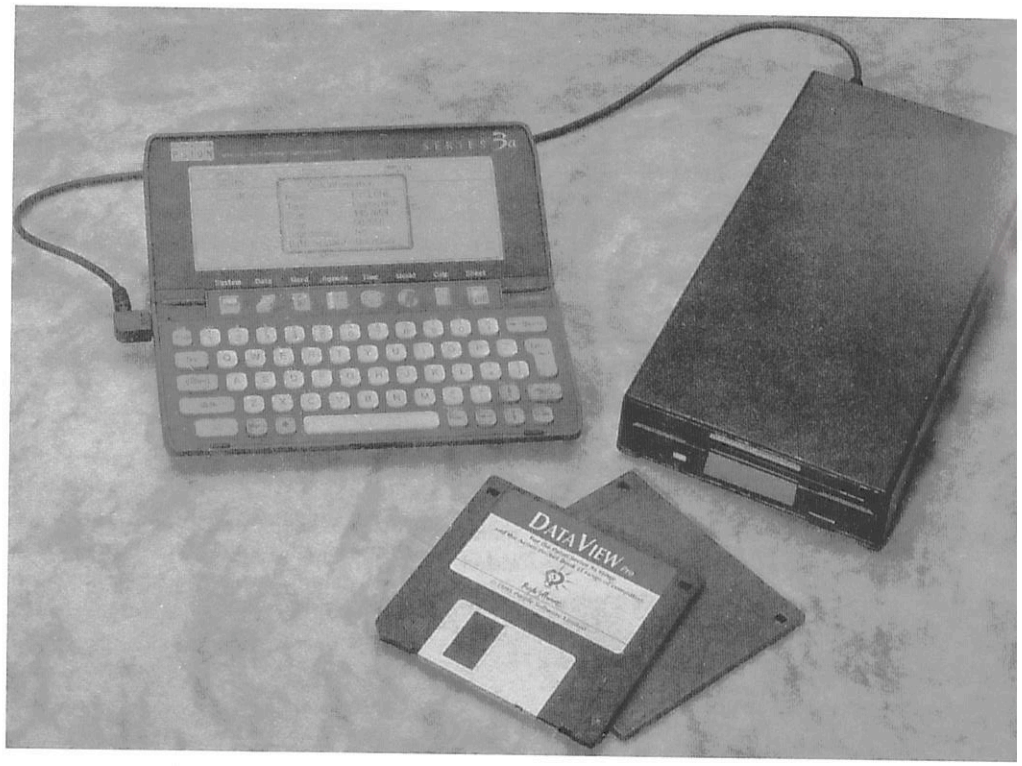
Cyclone

Floppy disk drives for the Series 3/3a are nothing new—the Cristy Handydisk and RangerDisk drives have been around for some years now. These both cost around £200 each, require a *3Link* cable to connect to the Psion, and are supplied with only basic communications software to allow file transfers to and from the standard 3.5 inch DOS formatted floppy disks.

For the considerable number of 3a owners without direct access to a full-sized computer a plug-in floppy drive opens a number of doors:

- It allows backup of important files from the 3a's internal memory and SSDs without having to purchase *more* SSDs just to hold your backups.
- It allows easy access to shareware sources such as Steve Litchfield's 3-Lib, where almost the entire collection of non-commercial software offerings is available on a set of floppy disks.
- It gives the opportunity to save money by purchasing commercial software on floppy disk instead of SSD (where available), usually a substantial saving.

An external floppy drive is also of use to many people with a larger computer too. The ability to keep proper backups is important for anyone who travels extensively, and it's generally easier to plug in a disk drive than worry about connecting to a suitable computer, loading suitable file transfer software, etc. And the freedom to move unlimited quantities of files to and from the Psion is often necessary too. If you don't have enough space on your 3a to hold all of your information then you can always just load things as and when you need them.



There was a real gap in the market for a more polished solution to this requirement, and it looks as though Purple Software have just filled it. At the time of going to press a finished unit of their new *Cyclone* floppy drive was not available for review, but I tried out a prototype of the drive a few months ago, and the concept seemed most impressive.

These are the key areas in which the Cyclone differs from what has been produced to date:

- The *Cyclone* doesn't require connection to the 3a via a *3Link* cable—you just plug your 3a directly into the lead supplied. For non-PC owners this saves the additional £80 expense of having to buy an otherwise useless *3Link*.
- It comes supplied with Purple's superb File Manager software (see my review on page 16 of issue 4 of *Palmtop*). This gives a slick and friendly graphical interface for manipulating files across the 3a, your SSDs and the Cyclone drive.
- You can actually *run* software directly from the Cyclone drive, just

as though it were another SSD (it simply appears as drive C: to all your system software). The other drives did not allow this.

- It will run off batteries as well as mains power, so is truly portable.

All of this adds up to a well rounded specification and a unit with lots of potential. The drive is not cheap at £169.95 (including VAT), but considering that it includes all the hardware and software you need to get running (apart from a mains adaptor and batteries) it is at least a more complete solution than any other alternative on the market. Purple's decision to make the unit function without the added expense of a *3Link* cable was obviously an important one, and I'm sure that the extra cost of this put off several people from buying the other drives.

We will feature a full review of the hardware in the next issue of *Palmtop*, but assuming that everything works as planned I see this product as being a significant addition to the 3a range of products. The Cyclone does not work with the original Series 3 or MC laptop computers, but is compatible with the Psion WorkAbout.

Steve Clack

InfoBOX

The Cyclone drive should be available by the time you read this. See the ad on page 90 for more details.

Full-sized Keyboard for 3a

Another testimony to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of those who develop for the Series 3/3a platform—I'm *sure* that I read a few postings from people on the Internet some months back saying that this just *couldn't* be done. Anyway, here it is—the ability to connect a full-sized PC keyboard to your Series 3a is here!

At first I was pretty sceptical about the whole concept of this. The idea of lashing together a 3a, *3Link*, a PC keyboard, the 'little black box' and all those cables seemed just a little too contrived. I'd be the first to admit that the 3a's keyboard is probably its biggest weakness, and that long typing sessions with those funny little white buttons are enough to frustrate even the most ardent 3a fan; unfortunately if the only alternative is to lash together half a dozen boxes and wires then I'm likely to make do with the limitations of the 3a's own little 'pecking panel', or to use a desktop or laptop computer.

With this trepidation I diligently unpacked the components of the keyboard add-on. The heart of the system is a black plastic casing 100mm x 60mm x 20mm in size. This houses a 9-way 'D' connector into which you plug the *3Link* cable from your Psion, a small circular 6-way connector into which the external keyboard is connected, an optional 25-way 'D' connector to attach to any printer with a parallel (Centronics) port (this is currently under development, and should be available by the time you read this), a toggle switch for power on/off, two AC mains adaptor sockets (one for powering your 3a) and a battery compartment to house a PP3 battery for when you're not using the mains.

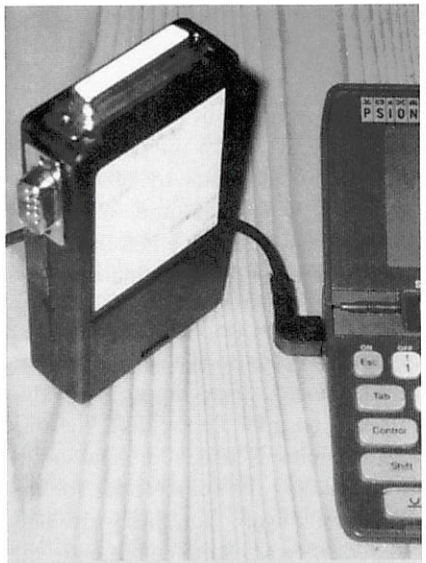
The only software that needs to be loaded into your 3a is a small (less than 6K) keyboard driver in an OPA file supplied on a PC floppy disk. The disk also contains a few additional utility files including the source code for this 'keyboard driver', but these are only needed if you want to change the keyboard mapping for a non-UK setup. Installation of the necessary file took only a minute, leaving a single icon installed on the 3a system screen. Another 15 seconds to hook up all the cables and I was ready to go.

The only steps necessary once the cables have been connected are to switch on the power to the box, highlight the new 'KEYS' icon on the system screen and then start typing on the full-sized keyboard! All of the normal letter and number keys work exactly as you'd expect, as do all shifted keys, symbols, cursor keys, etc. Those keys that have no equivalent on a PC keyboard are all catered for too, with the 'F10' function

key acting as the Psion <Menu> key, 'F11' as the diamond key, 'Alt' as the <Psion> key and so on. The 'soft' key panel above the 3a keyboard is also handled by the PC function keys F1-F8, with F1 taking you to the system screen, F8 to the spreadsheet, etc. In addition, the F9 key can be assigned to any application of your choice.

I was so impressed by the effectiveness of the keyboard mapping up to this point that it took me some minutes to discover the one keyboard combination that did not work on the review unit. Any attempt to enter a <Psion> and <shift> key combination simply types an upper case letter instead. Trying to change to the year view in AGENDA with <Psion> <Shift> <Y> therefore just opens the 'Edit new entry' dialog box and types in a capital 'Y'. The designer of the interface is aware of this limitation, and is working on an update to the driver software. The problem should be fixed by the time you read this.

The second limitation with the keyboard has nothing to do with the design of the interface, but is potentially more serious from a user's point of view. This is that the product does not work with any software that is not written in 'C'. In simple terms this means that almost no shareware programs will recognise the presence of the external keyboard, and neither will many commercial ones. In fact of the dozen or so programs I tried out, the only ones to function with the keyboard were those written by Purple Software. Purple write all of their software in 'C' (as opposed to OPL), and I tried their File Manager, Paint, Drawit and Chess programs—all of which worked flawlessly. All of the built-in 3a software works fine too, with the exception of the Patience game on the 1Mb and 2Mb machines.



The 'little black box'

This insoluble limitation is a function of the way OPL software addresses the hardware of the machine, and cannot be changed. The significance of this will of course depend entirely upon the way you plan to use the interface. If you are planning to purchase it primarily to enhance your use of the built-in word processor (probably the most common requirement) then you'll encounter no problems. If you were hoping to operate all of your 3a software using a big keyboard then you'll be disappointed.

Overall, operation of the keyboard is totally unremarkable apart from the limitations mentioned above. When used in conjunction with suitable programs it simply works, and it works well. I can't vouch for typing at 100 words per minute, because I can't do it, but for my own modest 45wpm typing skills the whole setup didn't drop a single character. Moving between applications and generally going about your business on the 3a works just as well as with the machine's built-in keyboard, but with the added advantage of those lovely, responsive, full-sized keys.

The software/hardware setup is designed to work with most standard PC keyboards, though it has only thus far been tested with Silitec, IPC, Cherry and Microsoft Natural models. You can either buy the interface as a stand-alone unit for use with your own keyboard, or purchase it with a 'Compact Cherry' model as shown in the photograph on page 17. This was supplied to me with the review unit and worked admirably. It's only 200mm by 130mm by less than 20mm in size, and considering its compactness has quite a good feel. It's certainly not on a par with the best quality keyboards available, but has at least as good a tactile response as the average laptop computer. I would strongly recommend anyone anticipating to carry a keyboard on their travels to consider this as an especially portable solution.

For non-UK users it is possible to re-map the keyboard for use with different character mappings, much like a standard PC keyboard. US and French versions of the keyboard driver are already supplied with the interface, and these can easily be adapted for other languages.

For many users (including myself) this add-on will be too much of a compromise to the 3a's convenience and portability, but for others it will help to free them from the purchase of a PC, and make it possible to write their memoirs on the 3a with the minimum of finger strain. All we need now is a full-sized collapsible 15 inch screen!

Steve Clack

InfoBOX

The interface unit is available at a UK price of £65 including a link lead to power your 3a from the box when you are using your 3a mains adaptor to power the interface. The optional Cherry Compact keyboard costs an additional £55 (all prices exclude shipping).

Please check directly with Dr Baker for availability of the parallel print option, and for pricing to non-UK customers.

Contact: *Dr Keith R Baker*
Tel: *+44 (0)1703 864310*
Fax: *as above (during office hours)*
E-mail: *krb@ecs.soton.ac.uk*

WIN*link*3 CD-ROM

For Issue 4 of *Palmtop* I reviewed volume 1 of the CD4PSION shareware collection on CD-ROM, and expressed my disappointment at the number of duplicate and out-of-date files found on the disk. In contrast, the WIN*link*3 CD from Yellow Computing has a much more impressive contents list and is very hard to fault.

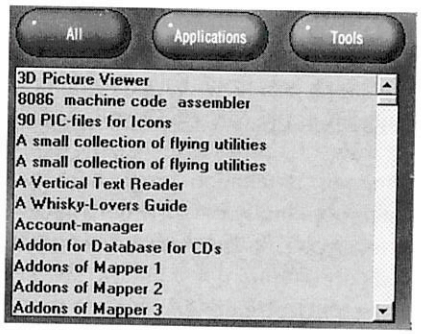
Setup and installation could hardly be easier. Windows 95 users will find that this CD makes use of AutoRun, with the startup logo appearing shortly after the CD has been inserted. For Windows 3.1 users, the CD's SETUP routine should be selected. It's then a simple case of selecting one of the two available languages (either English or German), and then exploring the disk from the main menu.

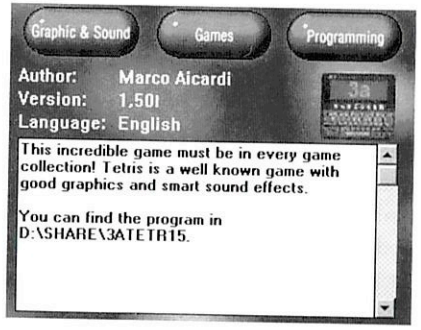
This CD is remarkably full, and contains much more useful material than any other shareware CD ROMs I've seen. For a start, the disk includes three fully licensed pieces of Windows software:

- WINlink - The quick and easy way to copy files onto your Series 3a. This program is used to transfer selected files from your CD directly onto your Psion, via the *3Link* serial lead.
- Agenda 3 - The PC diary compatible with Series 3 Agenda files.
- 3BASE - A Windows program to convert Psion DATA files into formats compatible with PC-based database programs.

Most users who buy this CD-ROM will be doing so primarily for the shareware content, and they won't be disappointed. The disk contains over 500 programs, both zipped and unzipped, including popular packages such as Mapper, Notepad, the JB range, and the Series 3a emulator. To select a program you simply scroll down a list of programs, or select them from the category list. You're then presented with the version number, author's name, a brief description, and a screenshot of the program. If you like what you see, just click on the icon to install it—easy! Anyone who's ever had to copy a program onto their machine the hard way (decompressing, then manually copying files into the correct directories), will wish they'd found this CD years ago!

In addition to the shareware, the disk also contains a collection of AVI 'movies', which are scrolling advertisements for the Series 3 range. One of the most impressive demos is the scrolling sales presentation that's captivated me when I've seen it on display at computer stores. Nearly a third of the CD's entire contents is taken up with these movie files, some of which are in German, but as Psion software is relatively small in size, you don't feel 'cheated'.




Graphic & Sound
Games
Programming
Author: Marco Aicardi
Version: 1.50i
Language: English
This incredible game must be in every game collection! Tetris is a well known game with good graphics and smart sound effects.
You can find the program in D:\SHARE\3ATETR15.

WIN*link*3 contains:

- 6771 files in total.
- Over 500 ready to run Series 3/3a programs.
- 170Mb of moving pictures and demos.
- 481 pictures in various formats (63Mb).
- 304 sound files in WVE format.

There are some very nice touches to this disk, such as the support for WVE files. For users who like to show off their Series 3a's sound system over 300 audio files have been included, with the option to preview the sound through your PC before installing them.

A set of scrolling commercials for other leading software suppliers, retailers and services are also available from the main menu, as well as a Windows help file.

As I mentioned in my last CD-ROM review, files on CD-ROM are likely to be more out-of-date than the ones you would find either on an online service, the Internet, or from a floppy disk-based source such as *3Lib*, but to my knowledge this is the only product which allows you to view screenshots of a complete shareware library before downloading the program onto your machine, and has to be the easiest way to ensure that installation is hassle-free.

Polished and professional, the WIN*link*3 CD-ROM is recommended as an excellent way to experience Psion shareware for the first time.

As well as the *3Link* serial lead, you'll need at least a 386 PC running Windows 3.1 or higher, a CD-ROM drive, VGA screen and 2Mb of RAM.

Pete Sipple

InfoBOX

The WIN*link*3 CD-ROM is available directly from Widget Software at £39.95 inc. VAT.

Phone: +44 (0)1438 815444

Fax: +44 (0)1438 815222

Games Pack 5

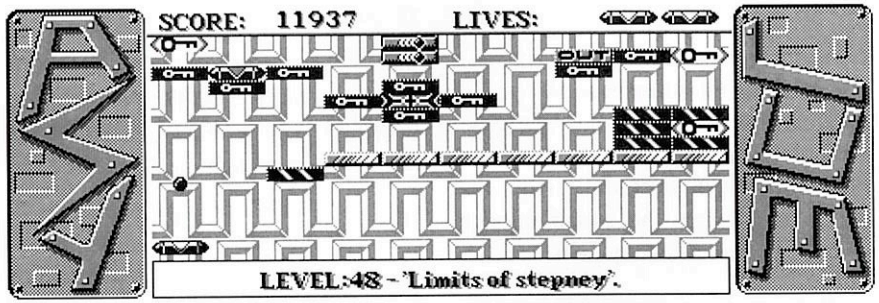
I'm afraid I got off to a bad start with this one. The software is supplied on a single 720K DOS floppy disk, and the instruction manual (printed in English, French and German) tells you precisely how to install the four games onto your 3a (it doesn't run on the Series 3 Classic) from a PC. Ample description is given on how to connect the *3Link* and what to type into your PC—great.

Once you have started the installation program under Windows you are led through a beautifully polished and simple setup procedure that automatically places all of the necessary files into the right subdirectories of your 3a—great again. Okay, so what if you've got a Mac, or an Acorn, or whatever? No dice. There is no acknowledgement of the *existence* of non-PC computers, let alone anything resembling instructions.

If you don't use a PC then you are doomed to fumbling around trying to work out where they all go. Be warned that the disk contains quite a number of files with non-obvious names and extensions, so it's going to be a difficult process. I got around the problem by using an Apple Macintosh with a built-in 486 PC processor to allow the Windows installation program to run, but this option is obviously not available to everyone. I *know* that us non-PC users are in a minority, but the absence of even a description of where to manually put the files is a serious omission.

Once I finally succeeded in getting the programs installed, I was presented with four shiny new icons to try out:

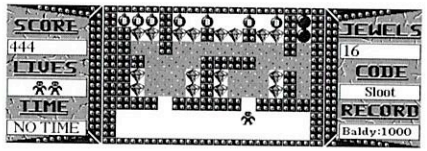
ASYLUM is functionally another 'Breakout' clone, like *PopOut* from Psion's Games Pack 3a (reviewed in issue 2). From a more detailed perspective it is very different though. As with all four games in this pack at least one third of the available screen area is taken up by a decorative border which performs no useful function, so the tiny 3a screen is thereby made even smaller and harder on the eyes.



The object of the game is to move your 'bat' across the bottom of the screen to deflect the bouncing ball rebounding off the obstacles on screen. These obstacles disappear when hit, and when the screen is thus cleared you progress to the next level.

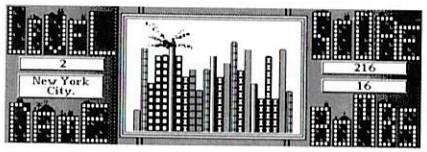
The levels are generally harder than with PopOut, but overall the game is less refined: the angle at which the ball hits the bat has little or no effect on its subsequent trajectory, it lacks the animated 'roll down' obstacles, and the scrolling of the graphics is less smooth. Having said this it does have its own attractions, and many of the obstacles impart different attributes to the ball: such as speeding it up, altering the rebound angle, etc. You cannot save your game as you progress to higher levels, but have the option to start at any of seven levels, giving a total of 108 different screens.

If you enjoyed PopOut then Asylum offers an interesting new slant on the game, albeit with a little less pazazz.



BALDERS is a combined strategy and dexterity game whereby you traverse your little 'man' through a diamond mine, picking up all the diamonds on the way. You are hampered by an array of spherical 'bombs' which fall down and squash you if you have previously walked underneath them.

The principle is sound enough, but the implementation is rather bland, with small and uninteresting icons on a game board occupying less than half of the 3a screen. This is very so-so for a commercial game offering, and is really not up to the usual standard of 3a games.

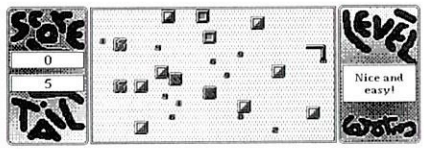


Splat! Oops, failed again

BLITZ takes up less than half of the screen once again, and suffers the same visually crude appearance as *Balders*. The object of the game is to pilot a tiny aeroplane that continually traverses the screen from left to right at constant speed. With each pass the plane drops lower on the screen, and your job is to prevent it from smashing into the array of skyscrapers as it passes them. Your only means to do this is by using the spacebar to drop bombs on the buildings, which get shorter by a couple of storeys every time you manage a direct hit. This game is very simplistic, and I got bored with it after about five minutes. With the sophistication of the average 3a game these days I think there's very little market for anything so basic. Blitz is only one step up from the original Ping-Pong of the 1970s!

By this time I was losing faith in the whole compendium, and WORM sadly gave me no reason to change. There was an old shareware version of this for the

Series 3 Classic that was quite entertaining, but though the Games Pack 5 version is a little more refined, the game plays much less smoothly.



The object here is to traverse a 'worm' across the screen, picking up all the numbered blocks (preferably in ascending numeric order), without colliding with any of the blocks littered across the screen. Steering is achieved by using the Q, Z, I and P keys to move up, down, left and right respectively—a key combination I found awkward and difficult to get to grips with.

If this games pack has a redeeming feature it is most certainly Asylum. It is inexpensive enough at a retail price of £24.95, but I really can't recommend it given the indifferent quality of most of the games. If you don't have a PC then the installation hassles alone should be enough to put you off.

Steve Clack

InfoBOX

The Games Pack 5 is produced by Yellow Computing in Germany, and is available from major Psion dealers on 3.5 inch PC floppy disk only, at £24.95 including VAT.

Backgammon & Chinese Chess

Purple Software, makers of 3a Chess, and shortly to introduce a 3a version of Bridge, have released two new strategy games for the Series 3a. These high quality games are easy-to-use, come with context sensitive help, feature a demonstration mode, and allow you to pause or save your game at any time.

BACKGAMMON is without doubt my favourite board game, and the only game to reside permanently on my Series 3a.

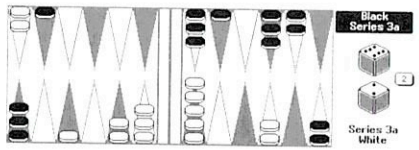
As with Matt Millar's shareware backgammon program, reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 4, this implementation works very well on the Series 3a, and makes the game enjoyable to play.

The rules for Backgammon are simple, the objective being to move your fifteen counters around the board, removing all of your pieces before your opponent is able to. The game is a mixture of skill and luck.

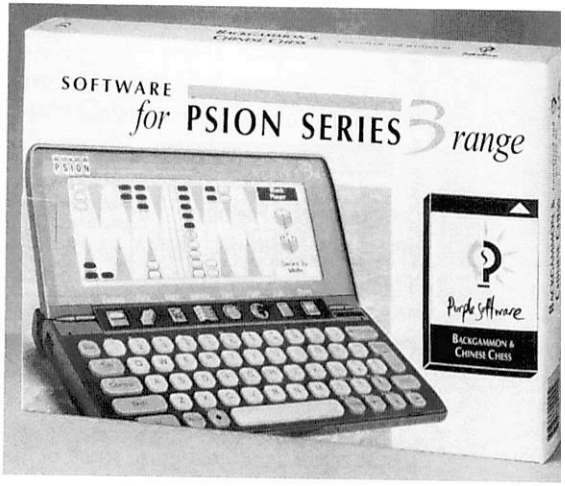
This version of Backgammon allows you to watch a demonstration game, try a two player game, or play against the computer. When playing your Series 3a, you can ask your electronic opponent to be either aggressive or defensive. The aggressive version is a little predictable, and at times annoying, but very challenging nonetheless.

The 'dice' and 'piece' animation is a very nice touch, with several options to change the way the game looks on screen. One thing missing though is the option to automatically roll your dice when it's your turn to play. You have to press Enter when it's your go, but the computer's roll is automatic. You'll also find that you'll want to switch off the slightly obtrusive 'beep' which reminds you when it's your turn to move.

The program comes with online help, and you can also ask for a 'hint', which is great if you're learning—or struggling!



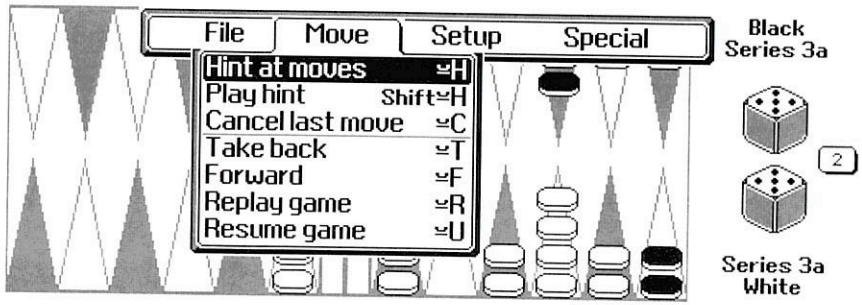
Compared to Matt Thomas' shareware game, Purple Software's Backgammon program does have a slightly more polished look, is slightly faster, and has some rather nice touches: for example the ability to save, review and analyse games. You can also play 'doubles' to add a gambling element. Gameplay is equally challenging in both versions,



although Matt Millar's version does have more opponent flexibility than Purple's 'aggressive or defensive' settings, and of course—it's cheaper.

All in all this is an excellent and captivating piece of software.

I must admit to having never heard of CHINESE CHESS before seeing this program, and after several hours of gameplay I'm still not sure I've got the hang of it. It's a fiendishly difficult game to get to grips with, especially if you're familiar with traditional Western chess. The objective is to capture your oppo-

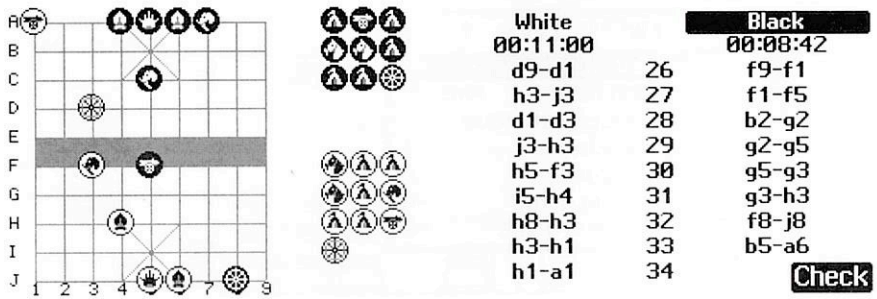


nent's King, but that's really where the similarities end. For a start, the board is very different (see below).

Chess players will recognise some of the pieces, such as the Knight, Rook and Pawn, but may be lulled into a false sense of security as the pieces move in very different ways. The Rook is the most powerful piece, as it can move any number of points horizontally or vertically, provided there are no obstructions, whilst the Cannon decreases in power as more pieces are taken. Pawns become more powerful once they have crossed the river (which represents the Yellow river, dividing North and South China). Some pieces are restricted to their half of the board, and the King and Chancellor are restricted to the Imperial Palace.

Confused? Help is at hand. Pressing Psion-I on any piece will remind you of the valid moves, or if you're stuck you can ask for a 'hint' at any time. The makers of the game have done an excellent job of explaining the rules with the inclusion of a tutorial, a help file, and the option to undo, or retrace previous steps.

The game has varying levels of difficulty from Novice to Master. The computer has an average response time of 3 minutes per move in Master mode, as opposed to around 5-10 seconds when set to Novice. To get an idea of how long a game takes, I asked the computer to play a few games against itself—the first game was a draw after 24 minutes and 197 moves. The second game was won after 21 minutes, and 72 moves.



White		Black
00:11:00		00:08:42
d9-d1	26	f9-f1
h3-j3	27	f1-f5
d1-d3	28	b2-g2
j3-h3	29	g2-g5
h5-f3	30	g5-g3
i5-h4	31	g3-h3
h8-h3	32	f8-j8
h3-h1	33	b5-a6
h1-a1	34	Check

A clock runs throughout the game, giving you an idea of how long the game is taking, and it very cleverly pauses when you switch to another application. The game is also saved automatically when you exit—be warned though, the auto switch-off is disabled during gameplay, so there is a danger of flattening your batteries rather quickly if you forget to switch off.

In summary, Chinese Chess is an impressive game, but hard work. Masochists, anyone with a lot of time on their hands, or strategists who've tired of its Western counterpart will love it!

Pete Sipple

InfoBOX

Backgammon and Chinese Chess, for the Series 3a only, is available from Purple Software or from major Psion dealers and retail outlets, priced at £39.95 (plus VAT) on SSD, or £34.95 (plus VAT) on floppy disk.

Call: +44 (0)171 387 7777,
or email:
purplesoft@cix.compulink.co.uk

Chrome desk stand

Here's the latest thing in Series 3 fashion accessories—a chromed desk stand for your pride and joy. Widget Software have had an extruded and anodised aluminium stand available for some time now, but this new up-market shiny chromium-plated version looks far more eye catching. The stand is nicely finished off with four little plastic feet to keep it from scratching your nice mahogany desk, and two more to ensure a good fit where the battery compartment bulge nestles into the extrusion. The only flaw is that there are some machining marks at the ends of the stand where the metal has been cut off to length, but this is a pretty trivial point.

In use the stand keeps the Series 3 or 3a raised at an angle of around 30 degrees, which you may find more or less convenient than having it laid flat on the desk, depending upon your personal preference. One thing's for sure, the stand looks *very* attractive, keeps your Psion more prominently above your usual desk clutter, and generally makes you look wealthy and successful. At £29.95 it's certainly not cheap, but it's a quality product, and would make a perfect gift for the Psion user with everything.

Steve Clack

InfoBOX

The chrome desk stand is available directly from Widget Software at £29.95 inc. VAT.

Phone: +44 (0)1438 815444

Fax: +44 (0)1438 815222

Pason

This is truly a gem of a program.

Pason, now at version 4, is a joint effort by Steve Hawtin and Andrew Lord. In the text file which accompanies the program Steve explains the reasoning behind Pason:

"I like the ability to have a password on my Psion, it makes it more likely that the machine will be returned if it is lost. Unfortunately the in-built password mechanism forces you to retype your password every time the machine is turned on, this can work out at hundreds of times a day!

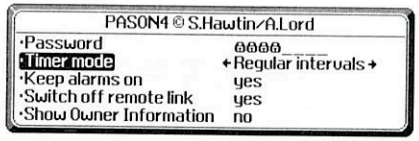
What I wanted was to have a password that I have to type in first thing in the morning, but only once a day. That is what this software provides."

Pason does that, and more. Once installed, it hides itself away in memory, and re-activates the password after a specified number of hours, or after a selected number of minutes since switch on. This gives you full control over the way your password works. Most of us use the in-built auto switch off battery saver, and most of us get annoyed when we have to retype our password again after just a couple of moments of inactivity. This program removes that annoyance whilst protecting your machine from unauthorised access. There are also a few other related benefits to Pason users:

- An option to always display owner information when the machine is switched on.
- Switch on your alarm sounds in case you forget to re-enable them after switching them off. This is especially useful if you rely on your Series 3a to wake you in the morning.
- Switch off the remote link.

Installation is easy. There is just one file, **sys$pas4.opa**, which should be copied into the M:\APP\ directory. The Pason application should then be installed onto the System screen using <Psion-I>.

This is a tiny little program, weighing in at 6557 bytes, and it uses just 10K of runtime space, achieving this by having a very basic front end.



Just about all you'll ever see of Pason.

Once the software is installed you are advised to remove the application from the system menu for added security. You can access Pason at any time: not from the system menu, but from a hotkey combination which you can change to suit your preference.

Drawbacks? Just one. The in-built Psion password is not directly linked to Pason, and so you have to tell Pason your password when you first start the program. You also have to tell Pason if you decide to change your main Psion password—the two must match at all times. If you change one without the other then Pason will stop working. Not a major problem, but as Pason is more or less invisible it could be easy to forget.

Pason4 runs on the Series 3a only, however, an earlier version, Pason2 will run on a 'Classic', but without some of the features of the later version.

Small, clever, useful... and free!

Pete Sipple

InfoBOX

PASON4.ZIP is freeware (3a only), available from the usual sources.

MonthVu

Users have bemoaned the lack of a month view in AGENDA since the 3a was first launched. It has everything else: day, week, year, list, anniversary and to-do views, but no monthly overview. *MonthVu* is an excellent shareware utility that adds in 'the bit that Psion forgot'.

MonthVu installs as a single (29K) OPA file on your system screen, and displays a simple month-at-a-view calendar occupying the whole 3a screen. It's important to note that *MonthVu* doesn't actually interface directly with your regular AGENDA, so you can't add or change appointments from within it. When you open the program you must first choose the 'update' option from the *MonthVu* menu in order to read in the latest appointments and to-dos from the main AGENDA.

Despite the lack of data hot-links the software is still extremely useful, and I found it a pleasure to be able to see a whole month's appointments at a single glance. The space available for text in each 'day' box is obviously very limited, and you can only see a maximum of three lines in each one—just the first dozen or so characters of the first three items for each day. If you wish to see full details of all appointments for a given day then you simply hit Enter on the selected day, and *MonthVu* will neatly display full details of every item logged for those 24 hours.

MonthVu has numerous configuration options to control exactly what is displayed on screen, it will search through any period to find a free slot in your diary, and the registered version allows you to jump to a corresponding day in AGENDA. This program is indispensable for serious AGENDA users.

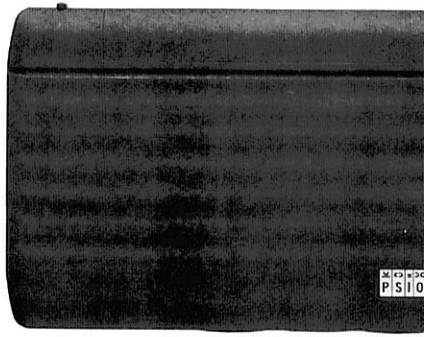
Steve Clack

InfoBOX

MONTHVU.ZIP is available from the usual shareware sources, and registration costs $15US or £10.

You can even jump to the corresponding day in AGENDA—if you've registered

Justify My PSION



Stephen Murgan looks at ways of making your palmtop pay its way.

It's happened to most of us at some time. You're using your Series 3 and minding your own business, when a curious onlooker starts asking questions about the beast and what it can do. Before long, they're ready to go out and buy one, and they ask that final question: "How much is it?" You tell them and their enthusiasm becomes somewhat dampened. Suddenly £300 seems too much to pay for what is now seen as a gadget.

It is an easy criticism to make; £300 *is* rather a lot of money—at least to most of us—and my defence is equally simple. For those who use it properly, a Series 3 will pay for itself in a year to eighteen months.

To the power-user (I hate that expression—to me it conjures up an image of a bespectacled and acne-ridden programmer in a windowless back room) the 3a is not as important as the data that it contains. This was brought home to me many moons ago when I heard that Brian May, the guitarist, had his Series 3 stolen. He appeared on TV and said that the thief could keep it with his blessing, but could he please return the cartridge for a no-questions-asked reward...!

The sad fact is, however, that a large number of S3 and S3a users never really use their machines to the fullest. Perhaps they are afraid of becoming too dependent on a machine that might

break—a point which has some validity—or are unwilling to put in the work necessary to make the machine truly useful. However, most of those users never read a copy of *Palmtop*, so I can safely assume that I am preaching to the choir...

Of course, most of us purchase our Psions for their organiser functions, and it may well be that the machine pays for itself solely as a result of its ability to provide you with timely reminders of birthdays, anniversaries, meetings and those other matters of social intercourse where tardiness or absence would result in embarrassment, loss of employment, divorce proceedings or some other undesirable consequence. However, there are plenty of other ways in which you can put your Series 3 to work.

Paying your dues:

Late payment of bills often carries a financial penalty, and it is a sad fact that too many of us pay too much in avoidable interest! However, your trusty S3a can come to the rescue by giving you the timely reminders that will save you some real cash.

If you don't want to pay a bill right away, it is but a moment's work to set up an agenda day-note under the due-date, with an alarm set to go off in good time to service that bill—seven days before is fine for me. The timing of the alarm is important: ideally, it should go off when you are not occupied. For domestic bills I find that 8:45pm works for me. You can also use a particular sound to associate with these activities. If you don't have any fancy recorded or downloaded ones, the church bell will do.

Managing your finances:

Perhaps the greatest drawback of PC-based financial packages is that most of your expenditure is transacted away from the computer, so you have to log the transactions on paper and then enter them when you get home, which makes it (a) easy to miss one out and (b) something of a chore. With a Psion in your pocket it gets considerably easier. When you perform the transaction, whether it be writing a cheque or making an ATM withdrawal, it is but a ten-second job to 'whip it out' and enter the details on the spot—or at a nearby spot that is more socially acceptable.

If your needs are modest and all you want to do is to keep track of a bank account, then you don't need special software to do this; a spreadsheet is quite adequate, and makes balancing your accounts a snap. However, there are some excellent packages out there for those who need more power and flexibility.

Using your Psion in this way has one other redeeming feature. Because all of your transactions are entered as they happen, any bank errors—funny how they are always in the bank's favour—are easy to spot. That's *more* money that the Psion has made for you. In the past two years I have spotted about £100-worth of errors in this way. Bankers must hate these infernal machines!

Once you have got the hang of it, it is a relatively simple matter to take the next step and start entering your future expenses, enabling you to make forecasts, do 'what-if' analyses and even draw funky graphs to chart your climbing fortunes—or lack thereof...

Other Ideas

One of the most elegant aspects to carrying a Psion is the way that it can make even 'Dead time'—time spent doing nothing in particular—useful and sometimes even profitable.

The size and usability of the Psion makes it an excellent note-taker. Mine often gets co-opted to scribble the minutes of meetings in real time, making transcription unnecessary, and the publication of minutes a matter of minutes (!) rather than hours.

Some years ago I was working in Munich, and one rainy Sunday afternoon I had nothing to do. I didn't particularly feel like watching television (Meine Deutsche is nicht so gut!) so I sat down with a cup of tea, a piece of cheese and my trusty Series 3 (in the days before the 3a) and wrote down my impressions of the city. The afternoon rolled into evening and the night came down as the tea got cold and the ideas poured forth. The article was subsequently published, my lady afforded a new dress with the proceeds, (she always gets the proceeds of my scribbles—I call it 'Computer Widow's Compensation') and I had the pleasure of seeing my work in print.

It probably wouldn't have happened if I didn't have my Psion with me that afternoon. Sure, I could have written it longhand, but then it would have taken twice as long to complete, and I would have found it extremely difficult to start writing. As a part-time writer, I find that the ideas don't come forth so readily if I am parked in front of a desktop computer. For some reason this is never a problem with my 3a, which is why I consider it a *truly* personal computer.

I never did finish the cheese...

What do you call yours?

On response to the 'Are you a Psion POWER USER' quiz in the last issue, several people have confessed that, yes indeed, they do have a name for their 3a...

"...I have to confess that I have always referred to my Psion as my '*Peripheral Brain*', inevitably shorted to '*The Brain*'..."— Dr C J Mann.

"...my 3a is called '*BRUNO*'—Brain Reserve Universal Notebook and Organiser), and his girlfriend is named SUSY (Sends Useful Sentences to You), alias the *3Fax* modem..."—Bernhard Betz.

"...Gill's one is called '*Crosby*', because it goes 'Bing' all the time while she is playing Patience on it. Mine is called '*Stills*' because of all the pictures I keep on it for fax covers..."—Mark Tennant.

"...if it's a part of you then why does it need a separate name????..."—Francis Creese.

"...well, in pursuit of my free issue I will confess that mine is called 'Egglochka'—by me at least. Others in the family tend to call it other things..."—Felix G.

And finally...

"Oh dear, I scored 10 in the quiz! Perhaps I can even claim 11, as my 3a came to my wedding with me!..." Also, my Psion is called Simmy! (Aaargh!)—Mark Avey.

Mark Tennant gets a free issue for 'Crosby'—anyone else out there with something even more amusing? - Ed.

Programmers' Workshop

by Andrew Baldwin

Quiknote - 'Build an Application' (Part 3)

The final instalment of our three part series teaching you how to write a *real* application in OPL.

A final polish

Welcome to this third and final part in the 'Build an application' series of articles. If you've been following things up until now then you should already be in possession of a simple but almost fully functional application. In this last article we're going to add a couple of features that just polish things off.

We're listing captain!

As it is now, the main *Quiknote* screen looks very bare. What is required is some feedback to the user about the notes they have made (if any!) The way I have chosen to do this is to draw a list of notes going down the page, with the most recent at the top. Each line summarises the date, time, and subject of the note.

Here is the code to do this:

```
PROC qnredraw:
REM Draw the last few notes in the window
    IF COUNT=0
```

```
        qnnonote:
        RETURN
    ENDIF
    qndrnote:
ENDP

PROC qnnonote:
    LOCAL no$(30)
    gSTYLE 8
    no$="No notes in Quiknote file"
    gAT scwid%/2-gTWIDTH(no$)/2,schi%/2
    gPRINTCLIP(no$,gTWIDTH(no$))
    gSTYLE 0
ENDP

PROC qndrnote:
    LOCAL no$(255),info%(32),c%,y%
    gINFO info%()
    info%(3)=info%(3)+1
    LAST
    c%=COUNT
    IF c%=1
        gTMODE 1
        qnnonote:
        gTMODE 0
    ENDIF
    WHILE c%>0
        no$=A.date$+" : "+LEFT$(A.subj$,30)+CHR$(1)
        y%=info%(3)+info%(3)*(COUNT-c%)
        IF y%>=schi%
            RETURN
        ENDIF
        gAT 10,y%
```



```
        gPRINTB no$,scwid%-20
        BACK
        c%=c%-1
    ENDWH
    gUPDATE
ENDP
```

The first procedure, `qnredraw:` replaces the dummy procedure you should already have in your program. All it does is to use the `COUNT` command to check whether or not there are any entries in the file. If there are none, it calls `qnnonote:` , otherwise it calls `qndrnote:`.

The procedure `qnnonote:` simply displays some text in double height (as requested by the `gSTYLE 8` command) to indicate there is no text.

The procedure `qndrnote:` is more complex. Firstly, it checks to see whether this is the first note we have added. In that case it ensures that the text originally drawn by the `qnnonote:` procedure is cleared by means of calling that procedure *again* having first used the `gTMODE 1` command in order to force text to be cleared rather than set.

Next, the procedure steps backwards from the end of the file, drawing entries down the screen as it goes. Finally, it calls the magic `gUPDATE` command to ensure that the draw to the screen happens as smoothly as possible. The way all graphic operations work is that if automatic updating is disabled by means of the `gUPDATE OFF` command, then up to 20 graphic operations will be queued up until the update is done manually. At that point, all the graphics will be drawn at the same time much more quickly than they otherwise would have been.

Jump around

And now we're going to add the final bit of functionality to our application, namely the 'Jump to data' option that has been hanging around on the menu since the first article.

Here is the required procedure:

```
PROC qnjump:
    LOCAL datapth$(128),comline$(128),hand%,event%(6)
    LOCAL ax%,bx%,cx%,dx%,si%,di%
REM Called to jump to the data app

    LOCK ON
    CLOSE
REM Jump to background - Manual Page 117
    REM CALL($198d,100,0)
    REM gUPDATE
REM Launch data with quiknote.dbf
    ax%=$0100
    datapth$="ROM::DATA.APP"+CHR$(0)
    bx%=UADD(ADDR(datapth$),1)
    comline$="O"+"Quiknote"+CHR$(0)+".DBF "+CHR$(0)
    comline$=comline$+"LOC::M:\DAT\QUIKNOTE.DBF"+CHR$(0)
    cx%=ADDR(comline$)
    di%=ADDR(hand%)
REM FilExecute
    OS($87,ADDR(ax%))
REM ProcResume
    CALL($0688,hand%)
REM Wait for Data to terminate
wait::
    DO
       GETEVENT event%()
REM Call ProcGetPriority
       IF (CALL($0288,hand%) AND $00FF)=223 REM Process doesn't
exist
REM Re-open the data file
          qndinit:
          hand%=0
       ELSE
REM Jump Data to foreground
```



```
          CALL($198d,0,hand%)
          GOTO wait
       ENDIF
    UNTIL hand%=0
    LOCK OFF
REM Redraw to take account of any changes
    qnredraw:
REM Default to adding a new note
    qnadd:
ENDP
```

There is a lot of functionality in this procedure, and it is all within the OS and CALL commands. What happens is that the application jumps to the background and launches the built-in data application. It then waits for the data application to exit and jumps to the foreground again.

Where now?

That is as far as we're going to take the application in this series of articles. There are many directions in which the 'app' could be taken from here: for instance the main display could be turned into a proper list view that the user can scroll up and down, there could be a facility to filter the list to entries with a certain category, or containing certain text; the facility to edit previous entries could also be added. The possibilities are almost endless, and really are limited only by the ingenuity of the programmer.

I hope this series has given you a taste of just how simple a full blown application can be, and if it encourages you to have a go at writing a program that up until now you'd been hoping someone *else* would write, then please think about making it available to the Psion community in general!

The End?

I'm sorry to say that due to other work commitments this is going to be the last of my regular programming articles for *Palmtop*. If you've been following since the

beginning then I hope you've gained some useful knowledge from the articles. Remember—if you have any Psion programming-related questions then feel free to contact me by email at *Andrew-Baldwin@psion.com*. Happy programming!

Andrew Baldwin

Thanks!

I'd like to join all of our readers in saying a big "thank you" to Andrew for all of his contributions to *Palmtop* since issue 1. He has been instrumental in setting up the 'Programmers' Workshop' as a regular feature, and this will continue to run indefinitely as an important part of the magazine.

Thanks again Andrew, and we wish you the all best for the future!

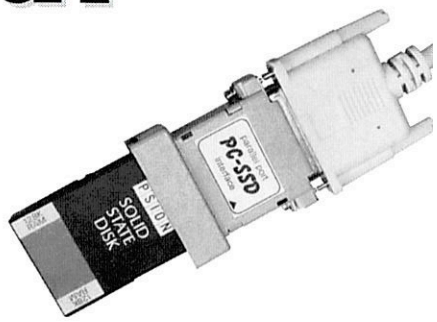
Wanted

PsiWin

Contact: David Huddie,

tel: (01590) 683852 after 4pm

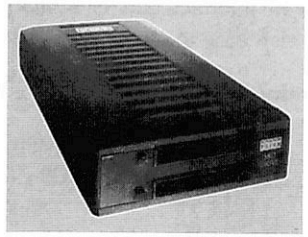
Build your own SSD Drive!



A great Palmtop exclusive!
Build your very own SSD drive for attachment to any PC parallel port.

by Martin Roberts

The Psion Series 3 is a pleasure to use in almost every respect, but the one thing I don't enjoy is hooking it up to my PC to backup files or try out the latest shareware package. There are a few reasons for this: somehow it seems unnatural to tether such a portable device to a PC, then there is the increased power consumption (or the ultimate disgrace of having to use a mains power supply), and finally there is the poor transfer speed through the *3Link*.



Psion has an elegant solution to this in the form of their own SSD Drive System. I am sure that like all Psion products this works very well, but £200 is a lot of money just to make your life a little bit easier.

Being a natural tinkerer I decided to have a go at building my own SSD interface for the PC, with the objective of keeping it as simple and cheap as possible. Fortunately the gurus at Psion developed a very neat interface for the SSDs which only requires two signals: a clock and a bi-directional data

pin. As these signals use 5V logic they can be conveniently connected to a PC parallel port with only a little buffering in between.

The interface is very easy to construct—anyone with basic soldering skills should have no problem at all. For those who really don't want to get their fingers burnt an assembled and tested interface is available direct from *Palmtop*.

The Hardware

As mentioned earlier, the prime intent was to keep the interface as simple as possible, so as much as practical is performed by the software. The hardware simply isolates the SSD from the load of the PC and converts the unidirectional signals from the PC into bi-directional signals for the SSD interface.

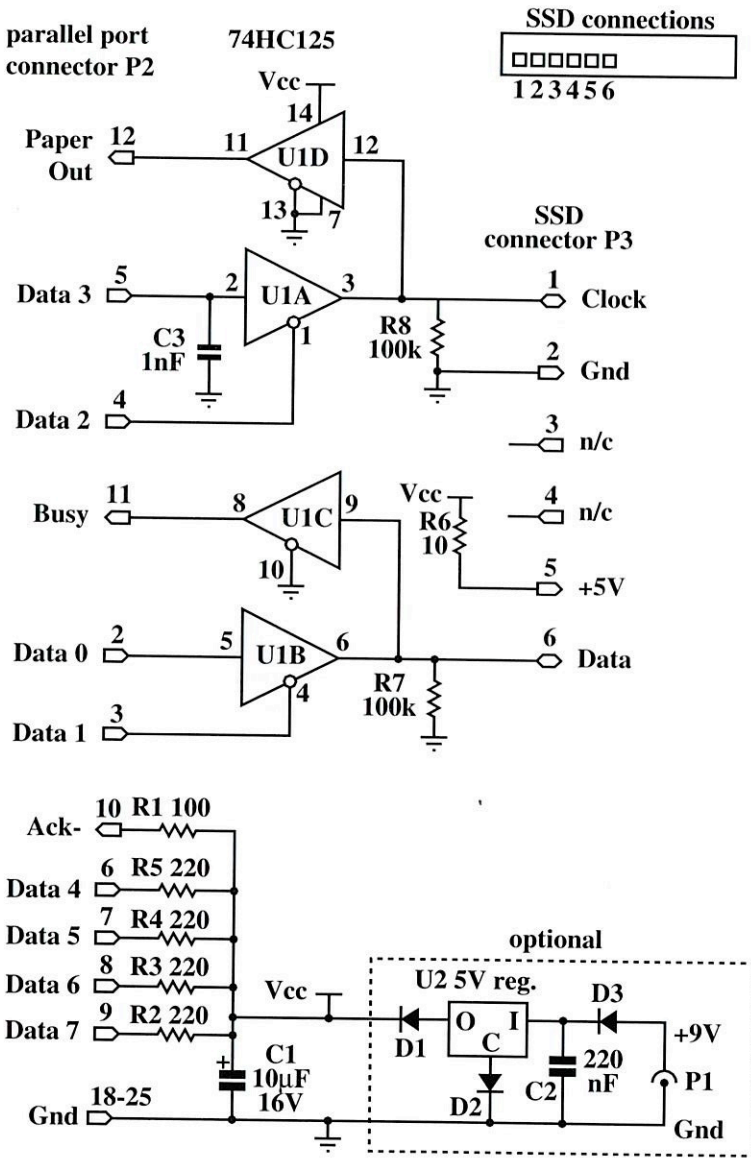
Parts List

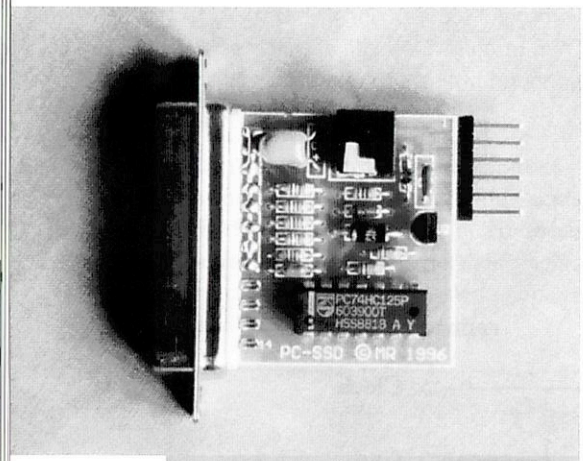
Part	Quantity	Legend	Supplier	Part Number
74HC125	1	U1	Mainline	74HC125
10 Ohm resistor	1	R6	Maplin	U10R
100 Ohm resistor	1	R1	Maplin	U100R
220 Ohm resistor	4	R2-R5	Maplin	U220R
100k resistor	2	R7-R8	Maplin	U100K
10µF capacitor	1	C1	Maplin	WW68Y
1nF capacitor	1	C3	Maplin	RA39N
36-way pin strip	1	P3	Maplin	JW59P
25-way male con.	1	P2	Maplin	YQ48C
adaptor box 25-36	1	-	Maplin	JW56L

The only unique feature of this design is the use of the PC printer port data signals to supply power to the interface and SSD. Alternatively an external power supply may be used, in which case the following additional parts are required:

Part	Quantity	Legend	Supplier	Part Number
78L05 5V regulator	1	U2	Maplin	QL26D
1.3mm power skt.	1	P1	Electromail	486-656
220nF capacitor	1	C2	Maplin	RA50E
BAX16 diode	2	D2-D3	Maplin	QB29G
1N4001 diode	1	D1	Maplin	QL73Q

Maplin can be contacted on (01702) 554161, Mainline Electronics on (01162) 777648 and Electromail on (01536) 204555.





The PCB with all components in place

A 74HC125 is used for this function—don't be tempted to replace this device with a TTL part as operation relies on the 100k resistors being able to pull the SSD interface signals low and the TTL input current is too great for this. The diagram on the previous page shows the simple circuit of the interface.

Note that diode D1 is included to isolate the 5V regulator when power is being supplied from the printer port, D2 is then required to compensate for the voltage drop across D1. The final diode, D3 provides protection against accidental supply reversal.

Construction

The interface can be built in any convenient container: the prototype was built on a small piece of strip board inside a DB25-to-Centronics adaptor box. The layout is not critical—just check everything carefully, especially the supply to the SSD, before applying power. A printed circuit board is available for the less adventurous.

The pins used for the SSD header are a little short. The trick here is to solder them on with a small gap between the plastic molding and the edge of the circuit board. The molding can then be pushed back to the board, giving the pins a little extra length.

The power required by the interface and a RAM SSD is very small, just a few milliamps, allowing the interface to be powered directly from the PC parallel port. I have tried this on many different PCs, including a Sharp 3100 pocket PC, and they all worked fine. There may however be some PCs which do not provide enough drive, and it is also unlikely that this technique will provide enough power to write to a Flash SSD—hence the optional external power interface. This is designed to work with the Psion mains adaptor, but any 9-15V supply with the negative on the centre conductor should be okay.

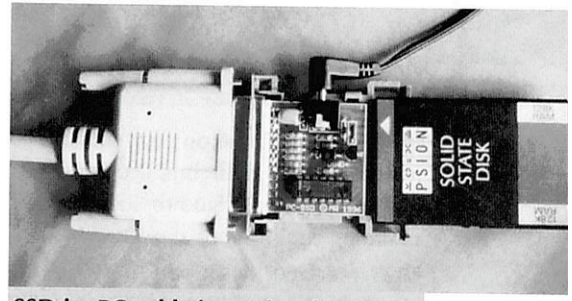
When you are happy with your creation connect it to a parallel port on your PC via a short cable. This cable should have all 25 pins wired to ensure that all signals are connected—if you don't have a suitable cable then plug the interface directly onto the back of your PC. When everything is hooked up run the program TESTSSD.EXE and follow the on-screen instructions, this will test the interface and confirm communication with an SSD. You can verify operation of the external power interface by running this program with the supply connected, an on-screen message indicates correct operation.

The Software

Fortunately Psion chose to use the PC file system format for their RAM SSDs and so a simple driver is all that is required to access these devices. Flash SSDs use a different format, and for this reason the current software only supports RAM devices. To install the software simply copy the file SSDDRVR.SYS into any convenient PC directory (for instance C:\psion) and then add a line of the form: **device-high=c:\psion\ssddrvr.sys /p:1** to your CONFIG.SYS file. The **/p:*n*** parameter, where ***n*** is 1, 2 or 3, specifies the printer port to which the interface is connected.

If everything is okay then the driver will be installed when you reboot your PC and it will then display the drive letter which has been allocated to the SSD drive. From this point on the SSD drive will behave like any other PC drive: you can copy files to and from the SSD, list the directories and even use disk utilities such as ScanDisk, but you cannot format—you must use your Psion for this. The performance of the interface will depend largely on the speed of your PC. On my 486DX4/100 a 100Kb file can be written to an SSD in about 5 seconds, extending to 10 seconds on my 386SX/16 laptop. By comparison, PsiWin requires 1 minute 50 seconds and, interestingly, the DOS-based RCOM requires 1 minute 15 seconds.

The driver will work under DOS or Windows 3.1. It also works very well under Windows 95, but it must first be added to the safe driver list or it will force Windows 95 to operate in DOS compatibility mode, with a consequent loss in Windows performance. To do this, add the following line to the **[SafeList]** section of IOS.INI in the Windows directory:



SSD in, PC cable in, optional power in

ssddrvr.sys ; Psion SSD driver

If Windows 95 complains that it has found an unrecognised driver on start up then you have not edited this file correctly.

The driver may be downloaded from my World Wide Web home page at **http://www2.wildnet.co.uk/~martinr/pcssd.html**

Hooked up to a PC and ready to go!

What Next ?

The interface described here is the simplest which will provide useful functionality—there are many possible improvements to be made. The most obvious enhancement is software support for Flash and ROM SSDs, which I hope to add in the near future. Other possibilities include adapting the interface for other computers and operating systems, the Amiga being a prime candidate as it has an enhanced version of the PC parallel port.

In the mean time I hope you enjoy the freedom of never having to tie your Psion to a PC again!

Martin can be contacted by e-mail at:

martinr@mag-net.co.uk
or 100532.2267@compuserve.com

No FLASH??

As already mentioned in the main article, the current software supports RAM SSDs only—flash devices will NOT work at present.

If sufficient demand exists then Martin *may* undertake the necessary work to add flash support at a later date, but it is recommended that you only purchase the drive from us if you already own RAM SSDs.

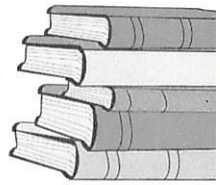
Availability

The printed circuit board mentioned in this article is available exclusively from *Palmtop* for £7.50. A complete assembled and tested interface is also available for £27.50 without the external power option or £34.00 with it. The assembled prices all include the software supplied on 3½ inch floppy disk, and the disk is available separately for £4.50.

All of the above prices include shipping/handling and UK VAT at 17.5%. Non-EC and overseas customers please contact *Palmtop* directly for pricing.

A good read?

Books aimed at 3a users have always been a bit thin on the ground, but *Capall Bann Publishing* now have three offerings for our enjoyment —Pete Sipple gives us his opinion on them all...



Three new books aimed at Series 3a users have recently been produced by Capall Bann Publishing. Anyone familiar with the range of Psion books published by Kuma will recognise the subjects covered and the names of the authors, Bill Aitken and Mike Shaw. Both authors have written popular books for the Psion range in the past. All three books are well produced and attractive softback publications, available from selected Series 3a outlets or direct from the publishers.

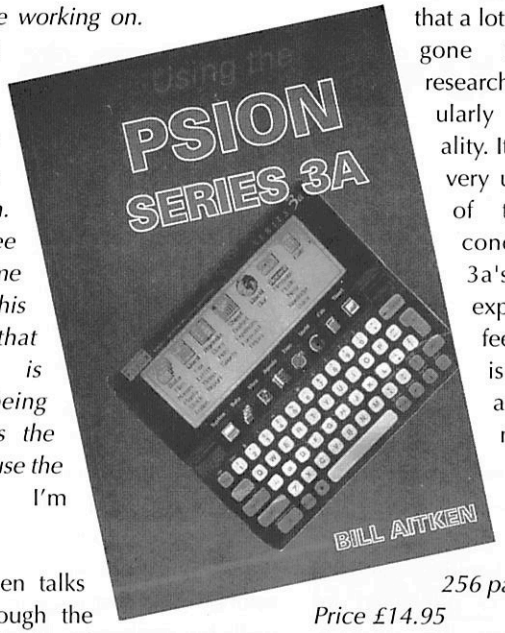
Using the Psion Series 3a by Bill Aitken

"Welcome to this guide for bewildered users of the Series 3a". That's the first line of this book's introduction.

I have seen several "Beginners' Guide" books over the years. Most, like this one, claim that *"no previous knowledge is assumed"*, and then take the user, step-by-step, through the basic operations. Apart from some minor grammar errors on the first page, the book starts well by explaining how to start up DATA, and then, on page 2 assumes that the user can cope with *"...This can be done by flashing the status window on the screen for a second or two and is effected by pressing PSION-Menu"*. I'm bewildered—I haven't got a 'PSION-Menu' button! Anyone who's been using their Series 3a for a while will know what a PSION-Menu key combination is all about, but does a total beginner?

Another example of the book's approach to the bewildered can be found on page 6, during the explanation of the touch bar... *"For example, if you were working in the word processor and pressed the Calc icon to do a little math before returning to your document, you will jump to the system screen as*

described but look at the name of the file you were working on. You will see it underneath the word processor is on the screen. You can see that the name is in bold. This indicates that this file is currently being edited. Press the Enter key to use the calculator". I'm confused!



The book then talks the user through the various applications in some detail, with relevant screenshots. The largest sections are devoted to AGENDA, SHEET and OPL. The book lets itself down by devoting less than a page to one of the most tricky aspects of the Series 3a, the filing system. A very brief explanation of SSD drives, directories and extensions is given on page 7, ending with the words *"for a more complete description, refer to the User Manual".*

The section on OPL makes for a good introduction to programming, explaining principles and the basics, but lacks a list of commands, or any examples to type in. Nonetheless, it is one of the saving graces of the book.

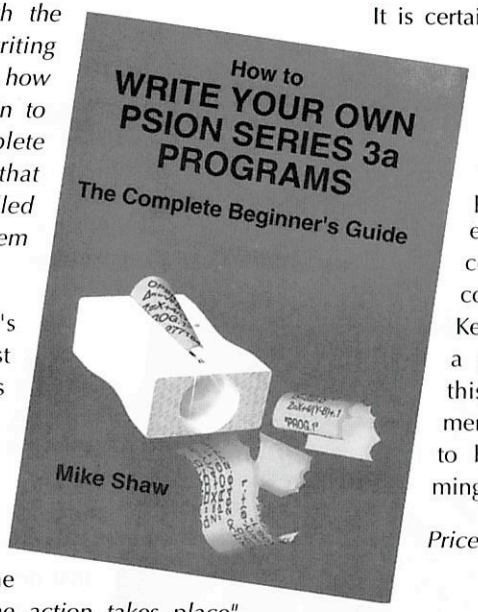
From the content, it is clear that a lot of time and effort has gone into writing and researching this book, particularly on Sheet's functionality. It does contain a lot of very useful tips, and some of the harder-to-grasp concepts of the Series 3a's operations are explained very well. I feel it is a shame that it is let down in places by an unexciting layout, minor typos, clumsy grammar, and some confusing explanations.

256 pages, including index.
Price £14.95

How to write your own Psion Series 3a programs by Mike Shaw

The back cover of this weighty 415 page book proclaims:

"Anyone who has never tried their hand at programming probably considers the task too daunting and difficult. They're wrong. The programming language has around 250 words of which only a few are needed to get started. And with very rigid, 'no exception', rules, it's far, far easier to learn than a foreign language. This book gently leads "It's-beyond-me" novices through the process of writing programs, from how to type them in to writing complete applications that can be installed onto the system screen"



Mike Shaw's book does just that—it starts with a basic explanation of how a computer works, discusses the CPU *"where the action takes place"*, and what memory actually is. The following chapters run through program planning (*"ignored at programmer's peril"*), memory variables, and then go on to explain data entry, graphics, menus and databases, ending up with more advanced topics and an appendix.

Overall, the book is well laid out and very structured, in the same way that a good OPL program should be. I was quite impressed by the way the author was able to achieve a friendly approach without being condescending, whilst still managing to explain the basics clearly.

The content of the book is broadly similar to that of the Programming Manual supplied by Psion, but geared towards explanation rather than syntax. It is certainly a companion to, rather than a replacement for, the Psion manual.

415 pages liberally peppered with example code, and complete with a comprehensive Related Keywords section, plus a glossary and index, this book is recommended for those keen to break into programming.

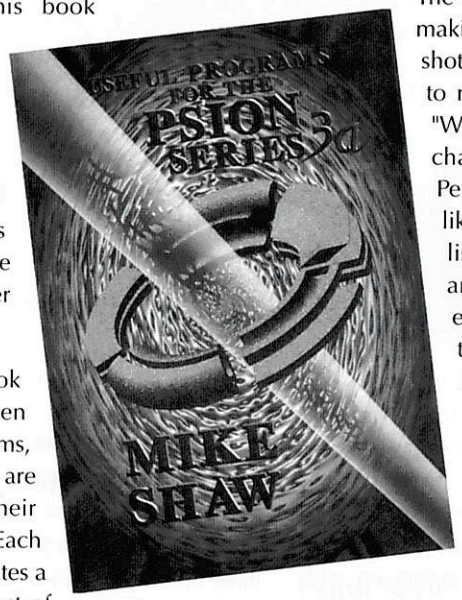
Price £21.95

Useful Programs for the Series 3a, by Mike Shaw

At 174 pages this is the slimmest of the three books, but for me the most impressive.

I started OPL programming some eight years ago, with no programming knowledge at all. I tried to read a 'how to write your own programs' beginners guide when I first decided to try programming, and was quickly lost. For myself, I found that the best way to learn was by example. I started by typing in a program listing from a book, making it run, and then trying to change it. That way, I could get a feel for just how fussy and unforgiving programming languages can be. After a few weeks and

a fair amount of patience I had got to grips with the basic concept, and it was then a case of referring to the manual supplied with my machine to get a handle on the other commands available within the programming language. If you prefer to learn by experimentation, then this book may be for you, although it does lack the reference sections and the tutorials offered by Mike Shaw's other publication.



The book contains ten sample programs, all of which are useful in their own right. Each one demonstrates a particular aspect of programming, such as data entry or the use of graphics. The ten programs are: World Clock, (which displays six clocks showing different time zones), a car performance utility (miles per gallon/kilometres per litre), a currency exchange rate converter, Biorhythms (use of a graph to predict the body's highs and lows), Deduce (a number-related board game), DIY Calculator (how much wallpaper is needed to decorate a room), Icon draw, Banker (a detailed finance program), and a routine to work out the date of Easter Sunday.

Each section includes an overview of what the program should do, followed by the code itself, and then a comprehensive explanation of how the code works, the tricks employed, and a line-by-line walkthrough.

The book is well laid out—making good use of screenshots and notations, is easy to read, and comes with a "When things go wrong" chapter and a glossary. Personally, I would have liked a floppy disk of the listings to save on the arduous task of typing everything in, but then that defeats the point of learning by doing!

Recommended for the beginner who prefers to learn by example.

Price £14.95

More information is available from:

Capall Bann Publishing
Freshfields
Chieveley
Berkshire RG20 8TF
Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1635 248711

Getting to grips...

Working with WORD

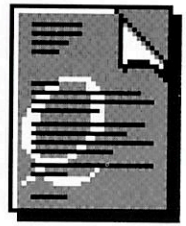
The second part of a regular feature aimed at the relative beginner to the Series 3a's built-in programs. For the next few issues we'll be looking at WORD, the 3a's capable little writing tool...

By Steve Clack

On the last issue I started off by summarising the major features of the 3a's built-in WORD application. Now you have a better idea of what the program can and cannot do we can concentrate on getting to grips with some of its features.

Where to start?

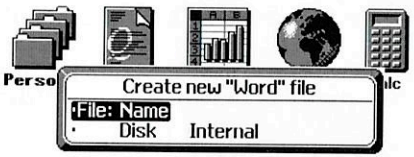
Okay, so if you've never really used the Psion word processor in anger then where do you start? Well, if you've really not created any WORD documents at all then you'll just be presented with an icon in the system screen showing a stylised piece of paper with the corner turned down. This will simply have 'Word' written beneath it, which is the default file name that appears under the icon. If you've already been experimenting then you may also have other filenames listed below the icon, and the 'Word' filename may even have been deleted. WORD behaves in exactly the same way as the built-in spreadsheet, database and agenda, in that there will always be at least one filename listed below the default icon. Any files already open and in use will appear in bold, just like with any other 3a application.



For the moment let's assume that

you want to start a new document. There are two ways to do this:

1. If you have the filename 'Word' beneath your WORD icon then you can simply highlight that and press the <Enter> key. This will open the default document so that you can start typing straight away, but be warned that it may already contain text you have typed earlier, so check when you open it.



Hitting <psion><N> to create a file

2. If you want to start a brand new file and you know what you want to call it, then it's easiest to move the highlight to one of the WORD files in the system screen and then press <Psion><N>. This prompts you to enter the name you wish to give your new file and the disk you wish to store it on. You must enter a name here, otherwise your 3a will refuse to go any further. As always the filename can be up to 8 characters in length, and your 3a will automatically put the extension .WRD at the end of the filename, just to make it identifiable as a word processor file. Don't forget that there's never any need to type the '.WRD' in yourself—people often don't realise this.

Let's create a document for the purpose of this tutorial now, so hit <Psion><N> to make a new one. Type in something like 'letter' (without the quotes) at the 'File: Name' prompt, then move the cursor down and select whether you want to save it onto your internal disk or an SSD in the A or B drive. WORD will now save the file LETTER.WRD into the \WRD\ directory of whichever drive you chose to store it. Don't worry too much about this bit if you're not so familiar with the 3a's filing system—just be aware that your machine has automatically stored the file in a place that ensures its name will appear under the WORD icon on your system screen.

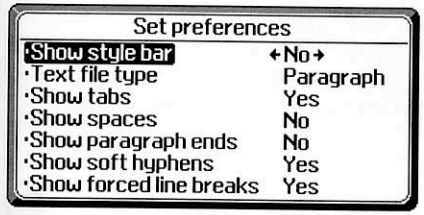
Next press <Enter>, and you will either be presented with a completely blank screen, or one with a clock and status window at the right. If you want to get rid of the clock to give yourself more visible screen area then just press <Control><Menu> either once or twice to make it disappear.

Now you have the writer's dream—a clean blank screen awaiting your input. The Psion has no distracting menu headings, scroll bars, icons or other detritus—just a clear, clean expanse. This can be a bit unnerving to the beginner as there's nothing to prompt you on what to do next, but don't worry, all will be revealed.

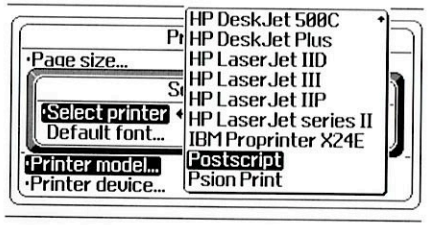
Let's imagine that you now want to write a letter to your Bank Manager, telling him that you would like to take out a loan to buy a new wood-effect Series 3a as a present for your mother. We'll firstly type out and format all the standard parts of the letter such as your own address, the bank's address and the date, then we'll put in the body of the text, format that, and print the whole lot out (if you have a printer). Finally we'll save the bare bones of the document as a *template* that you can re-use for all future correspondence.

A little housekeeping...

Before starting the document there are a few small pieces of housekeeping which ought to be done, and the first is to set your preferences for the way things will appear on screen as you type. We'll go into more detail on the various options here at a later stage, but for now just hit <Psion><Q>, or press the <Menu> key and select 'Set preferences' from the 'Special' menu. Then set everything as per the illustration below and press <Enter> to close the dialog box.



The other job is to tell your Psion what kind of printer you will be using. Strictly speaking you can do this later, but the printer setting affects the choice of fonts (typefaces) you can use within your documents, so it's a good idea to set this up now so that you can see what fonts are available. Do this by pressing <Psion><Y>, or just choose 'Print setup' from the 'Special' menu. This will present you with a dialog box indicating page size, margins, etc. Once more we'll leave most of the settings at their defaults for now, and move directly down to the 'Printer model...' line of the box. Now press the <tab> key to bring up the 'Set printer' dialog box, and then press <tab> again to bring up a scrollable dialog box of all the available printer types. Move around the list to find the model that most closely matches your own printer (consult the Psion manual if your printer is not listed) and then press <Enter> three times to select your printer type and exit all those dialogs.



Starting the letter

The first thing to appear at the top of most letters is your own address. There are many ways you can format this, so let's try out a few different techniques:

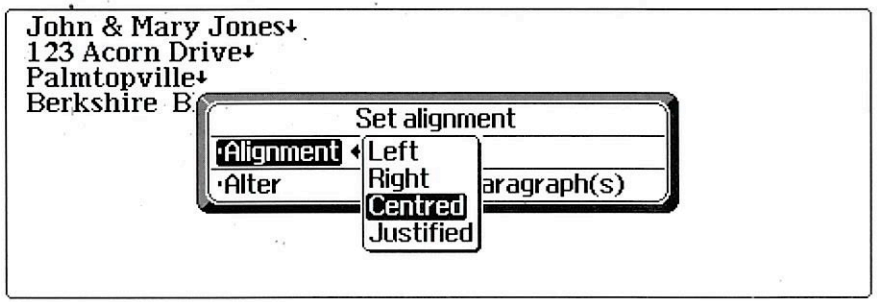
First type your name and address into the 3a, but instead of pressing <Enter> at the end of each line, press <Shift><Enter>. This is a useful little

trick to make the Psion see all the lines of the address as a single paragraph, even though you've split them all up. Of course you don't even have to press <Enter> at the end of each line normally as the 3a automatically *word wraps* them for you, but it's necessary for our address because the text only takes up part of each line. Pressing <Shift><Enter> creates what is known as 'forced line breaks' or 'soft carriage returns', and these will allow us to format the address more easily.

At this point your text should look something like the illustration at the bottom of the page, with little downward-pointing arrows at the end of each line to indicate the forced line breaks. This *left justified* formatting may be quite satisfactory for you, but let's try to refine the appearance a little by centring the address lines across the page. To do this make sure that the cursor is positioned somewhere on one of the lines of the address. Then hit the <Menu> key and select 'Alignment' under the 'Paragraphs' menu, and press the <tab> key to look at the available options. Here you have the choice to align the address lines flush with the left side of the page (as they are already), the right side, the centre, or make the words stretch out so they always fill the full width of the page, just like the *justified* paragraph you are reading now.

Select 'Centred' from the dialog box and press <Enter>, and your entire address will be adjusted to the centre of the page. This is where the 'forced line breaks came in, as it made WORD see all the lines as a single paragraph, and centred them all together in one hit.

In the next instalment we'll go further into the various formatting options available, and enter the remainder of the text of the letter. For now we'll just save the document so far, which is done simply by pressing <Psion><X> to exit the program. Because you have already given a title to the document its name will immediately appear under the WORD icon on the system screen.



Programmers' Surgery

The continuation of our regular feature in which Rick ("The Doc") Andrews addresses your programming questions and woes...

Using Data files

How do I read and write files with IOREAD and IOWRITE? The Programming Manual covers this on pages 128-131, but I find the explanation rather incomprehensible—especially regarding the storing of lists of numbers so I can use an external datafile (as a replacement for the equivalent 'Basic' DATA command which I cannot find an OPL equivalent of).

Tom Williams,
Davenport, Stockport

Tom, you're right that OPL doesn't have a Basic-like DATA statement. For those readers who don't know what DATA does, he's the Science Officer of the USS Enterprise. Er, sorry about that—I mean DATA provides a way to specify a set of numbers or character strings within the program so that it can use the information: for example, a Morse code program might have the dots and dashes for each letter stored in DATA lines. It is important to be aware that one program cannot access the information stored in another's DATA lines—you have to keep them separate within each program.

Keeping the information with the program may have been useful in the days when computers didn't provide easy access to data files, but Psion's

OPL has a neat way to read data without having to tie it to one particular program. And you don't have to get stuck into IOREAD and IOWRITE either!

You can build a data file containing many records, each of which can hold fields of data in a format you choose. For the Morse code example, say, where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a code of dots and dashes, you can have a number for the position in the alphabet, and a string representing the code in dots and dashes. So your record consists of an integer (whole) number and a string. You define the record using the CREATE command which looks something like this:

```
CREATE "Morse", A, letter%,
code$
```

then fill the record with the data you wish to store by assigning it to the record, then write the record to the data file using APPEND so:

```
A.letter% = 4
A.code$ = "-.."
APPEND
```

Finally, when you have finished, CLOSE the file.

Having said all that, it's a lot easier to enter data using the excellent freeware database program JBDATA. Create a data file in \OPD with an .ODB extension (named \OPD\MORSE.ODB) and use the 'Select Field Type' dialog to chose the types of fields in the record. Use an 'integer' for the first field, and a 'string' for the second.

Whatever method you choose to create your data file, it's simple to use the data within an OPL program. Take a look at this short procedure:

```
PROC ReadData:
    LOCAL rec%
    OPEN "Morse", A, letter%,
    code$
    PRINT "The data file
    contains:"
    rec%=1
    WHILE NOT EOF
        PRINT "Record No.",
        rec%, "contains",
        A.letter%,
        PRINT "and", A.code$
        NEXT
        rec%=rec%+1
    ENDWH
    CLOSE
ENDP
```

You can see that the OPEN command is similar to CREATE, in that you define the record format of the data file as a list of fields. When you open a file the first record is read into the fields automatically. To access the second and subsequent records, use NEXT to move the record position forwards by one. Repeat this loop of processing and moving until the command EOF returns -1, showing that the end of file has been reached.

There are other data file handling commands in OPL, like COUNT and POSITION which are all covered in the Psion Programming Manual. I've said this before, but if you haven't got a copy, get one. Sorry to keep plugging this book, but it's very good if you want to learn to program in OPL. (I promise I'm not on a commission from Psion to sell them!)

Need help? Talk to a gate!

In nearly every program I write I use a menu and help text. My problem is that I want to leave the menu by pressing the help key and then display the help text. But the <help> key is the same as the <Esc> key in this situation—if I exit the menu with the Help key, the help text doesn't appear.

Example:

```
PROC menu:
 LOCAL k%
 DO
    mINIT
    mCARD "File",
    "Open",%o, "Create",
    %c, "Close",%C
    mCARD ...
    k%=MENU
    dINIT
    dTEXT " ",
    "Information"+CHR$(1),
    $302
    IF k%=0
        dTEXT "","You left
        the menu with Help
        or Esc",2
        ELSE
            dTEXT "","You
            entered a menu
            option",2
        ENDIF
        dBUTTONS "",13
        IF DIALOG=0 : STOP
: ENDIF
    UNTIL 0
```

Can you tell me that if k%=0 how can I tell whether it was the Help key or the Esc key?

Sebastian Hochstetter,
Germany

You've hit a problem there, Sebastian. The MENU command returns the code of the menu item selected, or 0 for <Esc>. But you can leave a menu by pressing the <Help> key too, which Psion use in the built-in apps (try it and see). In OPL though, the <Help> key also returns 0, so there's no way of knowing whether the user hit the <Help> key or the <Esc> key.

Fortunately, the Psion OPL dudes have given a rather neat solution to this problem, even though it involves talking to gates (not Bill Gates). Let me explain:

There's something buried deep in the Psion ROM called the 'Gate' object, and one of the things it can do for you is to report the last keypress and key modifier used in your application. So how do you find this value? Simple: send a message to the Gate object

asking it to tell you. (Remember this won't work on the Series 3 classic.)

```
k%=MENU

    gate%=PEEKW($38)

    kpress%=SEND(gate%,23,
    kmod%) : REM 23 for
    last_key

    IF k%=0 : REM Help or Esc

        IF kpress%=291    : REM
        Help key is 291

        REM The Help key was
        pressed.
```

And you can use this for DIALOG interaction too. All in all, it's a very useful start to providing help at the right time, when the user asks for it.

Rick Andrews.

Palmtop Binders

Some readers have already shown an interest in obtaining custom-made binders for their back-issues of *Palmtop*. If you are interested to have such a means to keep your old copies neatly together and in good condition then please contact *Palmtop* directly.

If there is sufficient interest then we will arrange to have a batch of binders produced with the *Palmtop* logo printed or embossed on the spine.

Let us know what you want!

Resubscribing

Some readers have contacted us to ask when their resubscription is due. Don't worry—everyone will automatically receive a reminder with their last issue, so there is no danger that you will miss anything.

Psion Around The World

For the fourth in our series looking at Psion-related groups and services, we turn to the Australian South Pacific User Group...

The Australia South Pacific Psion Series 3 User Group comprises a committee as follows:

Duncan Schultz (Group Coordinator)

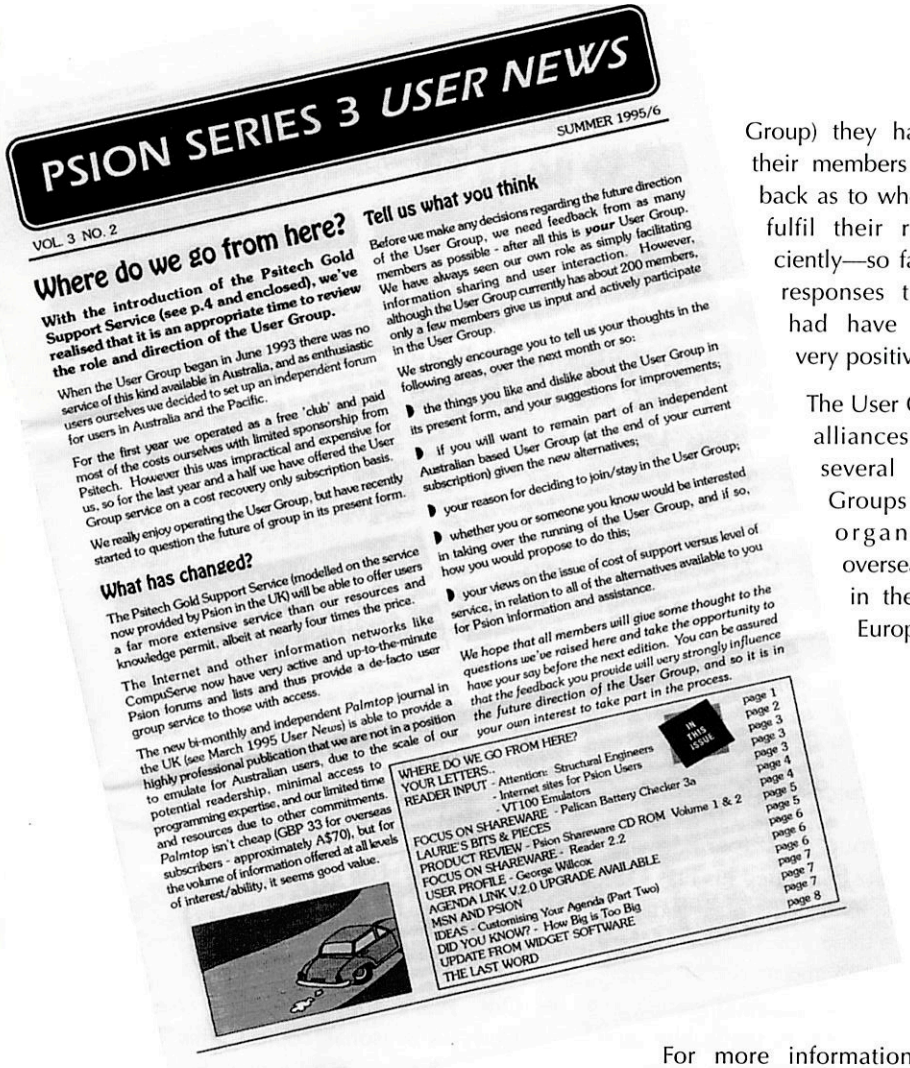
Roslyn Copas (Editor and publisher)

Luke Hughes (Secretary)

The User group was formed when Duncan Shultz purchased his first 128K Series 3 in 1993. Having purchased this he slowly became aware of the array of other uses it had and its power as both an organiser and palmtop computer. Not having anyone to guide him, and the UK user groups being so expensive in terms of Australian dollars (not to mention distance and the UK focus of their news), he decided to look at establishing some form of User Group in Australia. Since he had been so impressed with his Psion, Roslyn, his partner, and Luke, a good friend, had also seen the light and purchased Series 3 computers too.

Initially they organised the User Group to be a free organisation, obtaining a commitment from Psion's Australian distributor to assist in the funding. This unfortunately didn't work out and the User Group began charging for membership in mid-1994. They had never set out to make the User Group a commercial venture and have structured their fees to cover operational costs only. They now charge A$20 for Australian members and A$23 for overseas membership. This fee covers:

- One year's subscription to *User News* (4 seasonal copies). This is around 8 pages in A4 format, full of news, reviews and gossip written in a friendly and informal style.
- User phone support line available from 9am to 7pm.
- Access to Series 3 shareware and freeware at A$1 for each high density floppy disk sent (must have a stamped and self-addressed envelope for return).



PSION SERIES 3 *USER NEWS*

VOL. 3 NO. 2 SUMMER 1995/6

Where do we go from here?

With the introduction of the Psitech Gold Support Service (see p.4 and enclosed), we've realised that it is an appropriate time to review the role and direction of the User Group.

When the User Group began in June 1993 there was no service of this kind available in Australia, and as enthusiastic users ourselves we decided to set up an independent forum for users in Australia and the Pacific.

For the first year we operated as a free 'club' and paid most of the costs ourselves with limited sponsorship from Psitech. However this was impractical and expensive for us, so for the last year and a half we have offered the User Group service on a cost recovery only subscription basis.

We really enjoy operating the User Group, but have recently started to question the future of group in its present form.

What has changed?

The Psitech Gold Support Service (modelled on the service now provided by Psion in the UK) will be able to offer users a far more extensive service than our resources and knowledge permit, albeit at nearly four times the price.

The Internet and other information networks like CompuServe now have very active and up-to-the-minute Psion forums and lists and thus provide a de-facto user group service to those with access.

The new bi-monthly and independent Palmtop journal in the UK (see March 1995 *User News*) is able to provide a highly professional publication that we are not in a position to emulate for Australian users, due to the scale of our potential readership, minimal access to programming expertise, and our limited time and resources due to other commitments. Palmtop isn't cheap (GBP 33 for overseas subscribers - approximately A$70), but for the volume of information offered at all levels of interest/ability, it seems good value.

Tell us what you think

Before we make any decisions regarding the future direction of the User Group, we need feedback from as many members as possible - after all this is **your** User Group. We have always seen our own role as simply facilitating information sharing and user interaction. However, although the User Group currently has about 200 members, only a few members give us input and actively participate in the User Group.

We strongly encourage you to tell us your thoughts in the following areas, over the next month or so:

- the things you like and dislike about the User Group in its present form, and your suggestions for improvements;
- if you will want to remain part of an independent Australian based User Group (at the end of your current subscription) given the new alternatives;
- your reason for deciding to join/stay in the User Group;
- whether you or someone you know would be interested in taking over the running of the User Group, and if so, how you would propose to do this;
- your views on the issue of cost of support versus level of service, in relation to all of the alternatives available to you for Psion information and assistance.

We hope that all members will give some thought to the questions we've raised here and take the opportunity to have your say before the next edition. You can be assured that the feedback you provide will very strongly influence the future direction of the User Group, and so it is in your own interest to take part in the process.

IN THIS ISSUE

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? page 1
YOUR LETTERS.. page 2
READER INPUT - Attention: Structural Engineers page 3
- Internet sites for Psion Users page 3
- VT100 Emulators page 3
- Pelican Battery Checker 3a page 4
FOCUS ON SHAREWARE page 4
LAURIE'S BITS & PIECES page 5
PRODUCT REVIEW - Psion Shareware CD ROM Volume 1 & 2 page 5
FOCUS ON SHAREWARE - Reader 2.2 page 6
USER PROFILE - George Wilcox page 6
AGENDA LINK V.2.0 UPGRADE AVAILABLE page 6
MSN AND PSION page 7
IDEAS - Customising Your Agenda (Part Two) page 7
DID YOU KNOW? - How Big is Too Big page 7
UPDATE FROM WIDGET SOFTWARE page 7
THE LAST WORD page 8

The User Group has several hundred members, which is quite good considering the limited marketplace exposure Psion has in Australia. As with any organisation they tend to have a handful of active members and the balance consists of the silent majority. With the local distributor releasing Psion Gold Support (a commercial User Group) they have asked their members for feedback as to whether they fulfil their role sufficiently—so far the few responses they have had have all been very positive.

The User Group has alliances with several other Groups and organisations overseas, mostly in the UK and Europe.

For more information on the Australian South Pacific User Group please contact the following address:

Roslyn Copas
Editor, User News
113/382 Ruthven Street
Toowoomba QLD 4350
AUSTRALIA

Tel: +61 418 717281

Fax: +61 76 321081 or 392368

"On The Net"

The latest gossip from the Information Superhighway

On this issue, Pete Sipple takes a look at the latest Psion-related discussions, including comments on the special edition 2Mb machines, Series 3a construction changes, an interesting oddity with WORLD, and the big news about changes to the way Psion users access the Internet...

The majority of Psion users who connect to an online service directly from their 3a seem to do so via CompuServe. Email and discussion areas can be accessed using the ReadCIS shareware program. It seems that all this is set to change ...

"The newspapers yesterday were full of reports about major changes to CompuServe. From what I gather, CompuServe will abandon its present graphics and structure and move to something that works exactly like the Internet. Does anyone know what that will mean for those of us who access CompuServe via Psions? Will the ASCII-based system be abandoned? Will ReadCIS cease to work?"

(100303.2207@compuserve.com)

"It's too soon to know the specific implications of CompuServe's changes for ReadCIS or Psion users. The good news is that CIS is discontinuing HMI development in favour of an open standard, TCP/IP and HTML, and there will be implementations of these for the Series 3a. However, it's not clear how quickly CIS will begin to offer services in these formats, nor (more importantly) how quickly they will phase out access through ASCII (or HMI)".

(Dennis Lefebvre, Sysop 102404.3623@compuserve.com)

"A move to an Internet-like service would be a good one. Whilst this may mean that ReadCIS' days are numbered, it also means that it will be easier to write an access program, since TCP/IP for the 3a will be out by the summer...

(ajai@nwt.com)

(For more on TCP/IP, see 'Psurfing the Web' elsewhere in this issue - Pete)

Possibly CompuServe's largest rival, AOL (America Online), is making inroads into the UK market, as well as having a major presence in the USA. Is there any hope that AOL will solve the connection problem?

"Connecting to AOL from a Psion. Has anyone done this? If so how?"

(rrsheard@aol.com)

"No. The graphical interface of AOL (no text accounts available) makes it impossible to connect with a Psion. CompuServe has a text interface, but I read here that they are planning to drop it. Stick with a basic Internet Provider that allows for VT100 emulation."

(soberman@village.ios.com)

"It's not impossible—just very, very hard to do, so it hasn't been done yet for the Psion. The Newton folks on AOL started a petition to get AOL access on the Newton. The list grew to about 3,500 names and then I decided to write an AOL email client for the Newton. It's called Aloha. If there was a similar demand from Psion users I might be convinced to port it to the Psion platform."

(hardy@catamount.com)

It's a small World? A useful tip for the metrically minded...

"This is for all non-UK Psioneers, eg. the Dutch, who want to change the default distance setting in the World app. to kilometres instead of miles. From the System menu change under Settings ('Instellingen') then Printer ('Printer') the Units ('Eenheden') to Centimeters instead of Inches !"

(chrisvw@xs4all.nl)

"Why not use Special / Distance from the World menu? You can even have nautical miles!"

(evert.kuiken@inter.nl.net)

"World does not remember your setting of 'kms' between sessions. But if you change your printer setup to metric, then when you go into World, kms appears like magic. Psion have assumed that if you are metricated you will set all app preferences to metric. However I never print from my 3a, so I had not stumbled on this preference setting that miraculously affects World app."

"Personally, I don't like them. It makes the machine look cheap and/or tacky."

(scorbett@perth.dialix.oz.au)

"The only thing I don't like about the 2Mb model is the awful keyboard."

You may have seen advertisements for the new 'special edition' wood finish Series 3a—This model is being dubbed 'woodie'. Is the designer 3a popular?

"Personally, I don't like them. It makes the machine look cheap and/or tacky. I expected the wood effect to be much darker than it is, and I dislike the brown plastic when you open the machine and look inside the SSD slots. Hmmm... I wonder what a transparent Psion would look like"

(ajai@nwt.com)

"I agree, I thought the same when I first saw one. Love the outside, but the inside gives you this juxtaposition of plain brown plastic against grey, which I really don't like. I also wonder what the case will look like once the finish starts to wear. The edges of my 3a are well worn, but the sight of grey plastic showing through the paint is barely noticeable. I suspect that this would be much more obtrusive with the woodies".

(100302.1314@compuserve.com)

"It would be good if it were possible to change colours of a case via software—you could mix and match to suit your clothing ... quite a drain on the batteries."

(100014.1240@compuserve.com)

On the subject of the 3a's construction, members of the CiX conference have been discussing the look and feel of the newer machines off the production line...

"I have just bought a 2Mb 3a. I noticed that the screen is recessed more on the 2Mb and there is a slight offset to the right on the screen position—noticeable on the Agenda screen which draws a rectangle around the screen edges. Has anybody else noticed this?"

(pcaden@opshost. demon.co.uk)

"I have a 2Meg 3a with a perfectly central screen. I'd suggest that you have a problem with the alignment of yours. The only thing I don't like about the 2Mb model is the awful keyboard. The keys are very soft and don't actually click as you press them, so you have no mechanical feedback at all."

(pjmiller@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"Unfortunately the finish around the screen isn't up to much, but that's a minor point. I donngdyt hasdcve andkuy proeeblemn wihhtt thwe nerew kwey-boasrfd"

(millar@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"I find the keys just a little too sensitive to accidental keypresses. I do note however that the problem doesn't arise when I use the machine on a stable surface like a desk top. Perhaps this explains why the spell checker is built in on the 1 and 2 megabyte machines!"

(rbeasley@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"Psion reduced the operating pressure on the keyboard when the 1Mb and 2Mb machines were launched, in response to customer feedback (from 100g to 60g I believe) Many people prefer the newer, softer keyboard. The screen assembly has been re-engineered on newer machines and should be set lower in the top case. The screen component itself changed and the re-engineering of the case is simply to accommodate this."

(psion_c@cix.compulink.co.uk)

And finally... Psqueaky Psions?

"Does any one have a problem when opening their PSION? Mine creaks all the time when opening and closing and sometimes even makes a little cracking noise when opening."

(brilib@ozemail.com.au)

"This noise is fairly normal, it diminishes with time, but mine still squeaks a little after 10 months. I don't think you have a problem."

(gkb1@york.ac.uk)

"Mine creaks also. I'm going to solve it with some oil."

(4n9b3f$t5p@lake.hva.nl)

"Don't use just ANY cheap oil, it might contain ingredients that dissolve plastic over time! i.e., weakening the hinges. Instead, use something neutral like silicon based grease."

(bob@roboteye.cs.tu-berlin.de)

Lost without it? There's always a danger that we'll lose our precious Psion. One Internet user posted a message reminding us all to set up the Owner Information so that a lost Psion can be returned...

"I thought this was a good idea until I pondered the subject a bit further.

"Mine creaks also. I'm going to solve it with some oil"

"As someone who has had two 3a's stolen, one with a password set and one without, take my word for it that it makes no difference."

Would not someone simply remove the back-up battery from a newly found Psion to erase all memory of it's former owner? I'm paranoid about losing my new 3a."

(mat@cu-amiga.co.uk)

"Yup. If someone has the know-how and the desire they could take your Psion and do what you suggest. If you misplaced your Psion you just have to hope that it falls into the hands of an honest person, a technophobe or someone who doesn't know about the backup-battery!"

(Andrew_Lord@tertio.demon.co.uk)

"As someone who has had two 3a's stolen, one with a password set and one without, take my word for it that it makes no difference."

(steve@riscey.iafrica.com)

"Someone restore our faith in human nature!! Has anyone ever had a Psion returned because of the Owner Information screen?"

(Andrew_Lord@tertio.co.uk)

"Yes! My husband left his 3a at the checkout counter of a huge discount store. He realised it when he got to the car...but it was too late. By the time he got back to the counter, it was gone. Since this store is a membership only store and you must show your ID to get in and to check out I asked the manager for the name of the person that checked out after us. He of course would not give us the name, but did say he would call and ask the person if he had seen the Psion. The customer denied ever seeing it but we knew that it had to be him. Two days later we got a phone call from that thief and he wanted to return the Psion. He had copied the owner information down before he took out all of the batteries to reset the machine. He said that he couldn't figure out how to turn the Psion off and that it was just too complicated for him without the manuals. After all was said and done, my husband got his Psion back."

(Susan.Isaacs@ucop.edu)

"I once left my Psion in a public telephone box after looking up a phone number. When I got home that evening there was a note pinned to my front door saying that my personal organiser was at the local police station. Someone had picked it up and handed it in. The policeman on duty had pressed a few buttons—he didn't find the owner information page, but he found an entry in my phone book that said "Dad!". He phoned my dad, and asked where I live. When I collected it, I showed him that it was much more than an ordinary 'personal organiser' and he said he might get one!"

(straton@kjstarks.demon.co.uk)

"My 'ex' had her Series 3 stolen along with some other stuff. We found it next morning on the side of the road, opened and abandoned. Apparently the kids who stole it got bored with it because it had no games on it. So instead of password protection, just delete all those games."

(scorbett@perth.dialix.oz.au)

For those new to *Palmtop*, Psion related discussions take place in the six new comp.sys.psion elements of the Usenet newsgroup, as well as the Psion conference on CIX, and the Palmtop A forum on CompuServe.

Pete Sipple

Classifieds

FOR SALE

RangerDisk drive in mint condition with power supply and manual - £110.

Contact: John Currie,
tel: (01357) 522862
email:
101770.140@compuserve.com

FOR SALE

Psion *3Fax* modem, unused with manuals - £100.

Psion Money - £25.

—will consider part-exchange for 1Mb flash SSD.

Contact: John Cameron,
tel/fax: (0141) 357 2516

The Bible on your 3a

Steve Litchfield looks at the means available to get The Holy Bible onto your 3a...

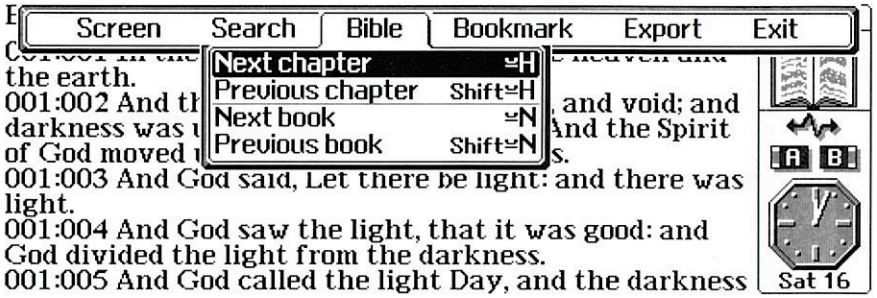
Available in paper form in over a dozen translations, The Bible consumes more than five megabytes of text, plus all the concordances and notes, commentaries and maps. The only publicly distributable translation is the 'Old King James', also known as the 'Authorised Version'—that's the traditional one containing all the Thee's and Thou's. This version may not be the first choice for some people, but all the modern translations are, alas, heavily copyrighted, and although it's possible to export the text from a PC-based Bible program, redistributing it is forbidden.

Getting it onto your Psion

There are a variety of approaches to displaying Bible text on a Psion:

Firstly, the simplest way is to have a set of WORD files, each containing the text from one 'book' of the Bible. The main problem with this approach is WORD's limit of around 32,000 characters for each file, as quite a few of the Bible's books exceed this.

Secondly, you can consider keeping the text complete (or at least in larger sections) by using Barry Childress' READER shareware program (discussed in detail within Poppy Holden's article



Using the shareware READER program to view the Bible

in issue 4 of *Palmtop*). This allows browsing and searching of large text files beyond the 40K limit. Even better, it allows you to use pre-compressed files (which can be distinguished by their .TCR extension), so the 1Mb New Testament text takes up only 400K or so.

The entire Bible works out at just under 2Mb in this pre-compressed form, so if you want to do this you can squeeze it onto a 2Mb flash SSD. Pre-compressed versions of both Old and New testaments are available from the usual shareware sources. READER's author has even implemented a 'Bible mode' in his program, to allow automatic chapter and book switching. There are advantages and disadvantages to having all the Bible text in one or two large 'chunks': doing a search is easier because you don't have to know which book to search in, though the search takes much longer because it has to hunt through a much larger block of text.

One advantage of using READER is that other long texts (such as novels, classics, reference documents and so on) can also be viewed, provided that you have sufficient disk space to store them.

Thirdly, there are two specific Bible reader applications for the Psion 3a.

1) Christopher Took's freeware BIBLE program offers special features like jumping to a specific reference or concordance links, and a compression system to save space. Note that his compression system is not compatible with READER's, so you'll have to decide which system you're going to use and then stick with it.

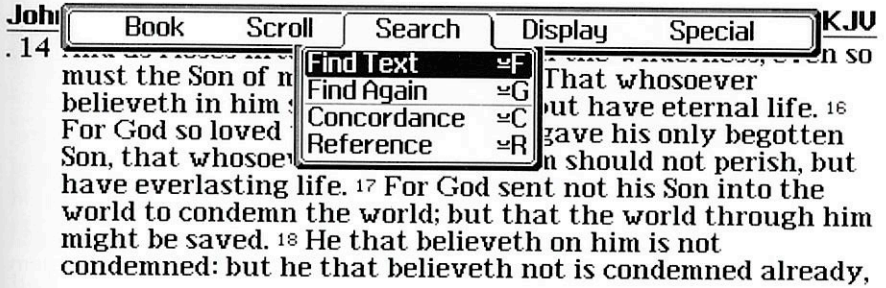
   So far the only data files ready for BIBLE are the basic New and Old Testaments, broken down into separate books (e.g. Matthew, Mark, Psalms, Genesis, etc.), but there is a menu option for a concordance, and the basic program looks very promising. Again, don't forget that The Bible will fill a 2Mb flash disk—even in its compressed form. In fact, using this system the total size is 2.3Mb. The major advantage of BIBLE over READER is the facility to allow easy installation of specific books only, so for example the four gospels will only take up about 150Kb or so.

   Christopher's BIBLE can be obtained free from the usual shareware sources.

2) A company called NTS in the USA have paralleled Christopher's program with their own faster version, written in 'C'. Using more advanced compression routines, the NTS Bible will *just* fit on a 2Mb SSD, indeed NTS can supply it nicely packaged in this form for $360. Even on floppy disk it is priced at $100—I suppose the faster searching & greater compression come at a premium price!

   I was impressed by the NTS Bible's bookmarking, concordance and notetaking facilities, and the whole application seems very professional. I've asked NTS whether they intend to repackage their program with a more modern translation and they are apparently considering the idea. If NTS can bundle the New King James bible text in their program environment they'll have a winner on their hands!

Lastly, there are a number of Bible extracts and verse-based programs. My own 'Lifeguide' is freeware and displays appropriate verses for particular moods or situations. Mark Esposito (of NOTEPAD and BANKER fame) has also produced a 65K Bible database full of handy verses and comments, which can be viewed from within a Psion database.


Book
Scroll
Search
Display
Special
Find Text ⌘F
Find Again ⌘G
Concordance ⌘C
Reference ⌘R
KJV
must the Son of m
believeth in him
For God so loved
Son, that whosoe
That whosoever
ut have eternal life. 16
gave his only begotten
n should not perish, but
have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already,

Christopher Took's freeware BIBLE program

So, consider your options and make your choice, I hope I've given a flavour of what can be achieved on the humble Psion 3a. Mind you—the cost of all those megabytes of Psion disk storage may encourage you to stay with the trusty pocket paper version!

Getting personal with Purple

We take a look behind the scenes at the most prominent software company in the 3a market. Steve Clack talks to John Holloway and Julian Swallow of the London-based Purple Software

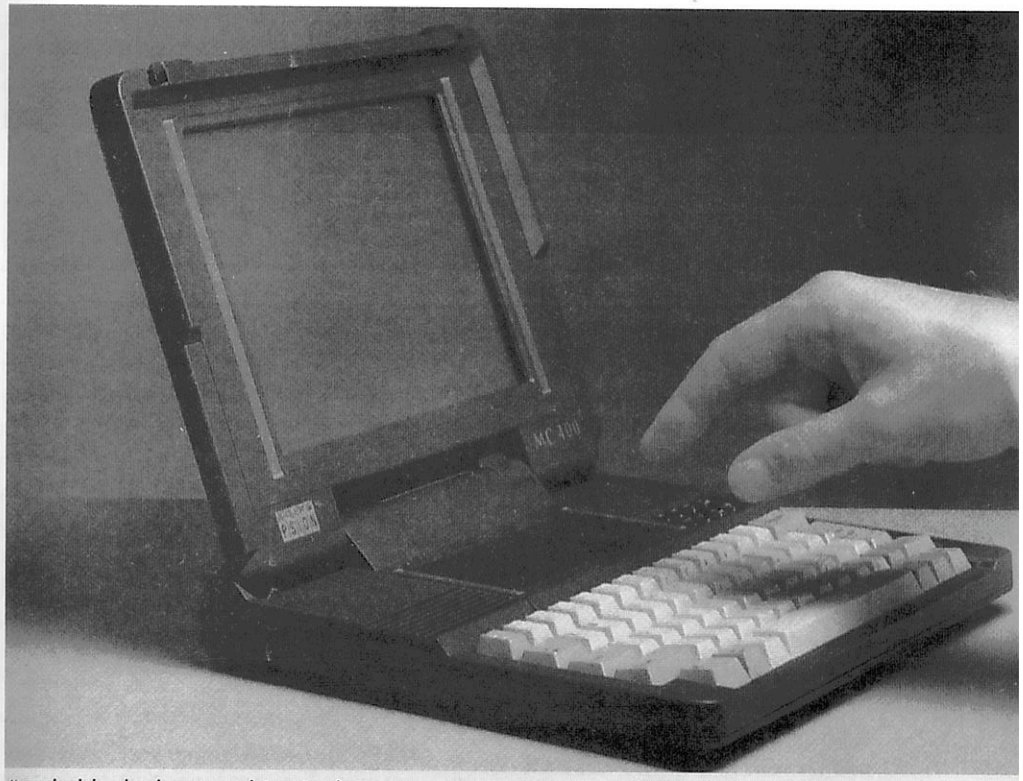
Palmtop: So First things first—how did it all start? How was Purple Software born?

John Holloway: Well, I joined Psion from University and worked there for something over 9 years, starting on the Organiser IIs, then the MC400—probably the best machine in the entire universe—then onto the Series 3.

Palmtop: Wonderful—I have an MC400, I'd probably even set up an MC400 user group if sufficient interest existed and a little more available software! It was such a shame that it flopped—I think there's a real market for a fairly basic laptop computer with a 40 hour battery life.

John Holloway: Mostly it was a failure, but technically it was quite superb, and if it wasn't for the MC400 you would never have seen the Series 3 or 3a. I worked mainly on the operating system rather than the applications, so I'm to blame for a lot of the weird stuff that goes on inside the machines, like the I/O system that most people can't get their heads around, the Object Oriented mechanisms, and I was deeply involved with such things as message despatch mechanisms. Being an Operating System specialist I was later moved onto HC DOS for the corporate marketplace. I'm quite proud of that, though I'm not generally fond of DOS!

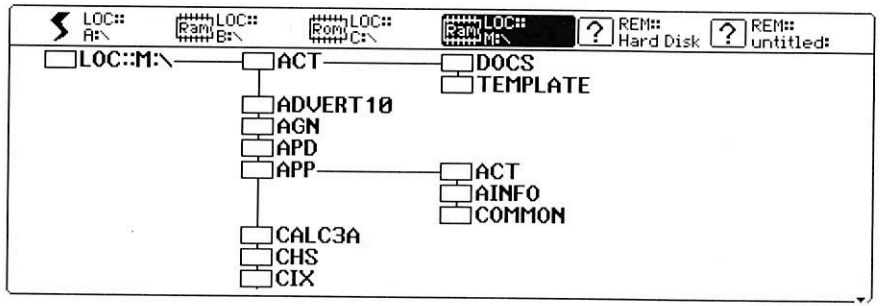
Of the applications I've written I did *File Manager* because I couldn't stand the



"probably the best machine in the entire universe"—Psion's ill-fated MC400 laptop

built-in filing system as presented by the Series 3/3a. I was instrumental in doing things like the Series 3 remote filing system, so I wrote *File Manager* primarily for my own use and then did a few other programs too. I distributed these onto the CiX bulletin board, and because I didn't really want to just give everything away for free I built in a self-destruct time-out into File Manager, and then got chastised very heavily for it! At that point I decided not to freely give away my efforts ever again. Anyway, some people liked that software a lot, and at that point I realised that I had the capability to write marketable software, and in fact Widget Software later took on *File Manager* as part of their Series 3 and 3a Tools Packs. The contract with Widget has since lapsed, and we have now put that into our own *ToolKit 1*, which has been very successful for us.

I had spent some time writing device drivers while I was working on the Software Development Kit at Psion, which included ones to drive the sound chips on the Series 3. I therefore decided to turn that knowledge into



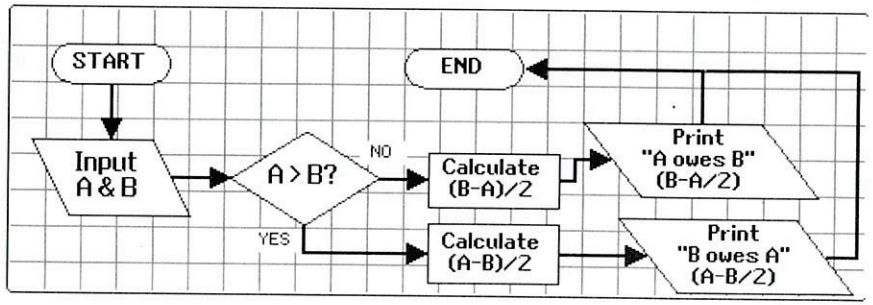
John's first baby—the elegant *File Manager*

another product, my next piece of software, *Music Composer,* was later sold by Widget too.

After about 18 months of soul searching I finally decided to part company with Psion, and to do the only other thing I had ever wanted to—run my own software company . I then wrote *FloChart, OrgChart* and *DrawIt,* which all share the same basic engine and form a useful suite of programs. Around that time I met up with Julian, who was then doing an MBA at business school. We then had a 3 month trial period working together to make sure got along okay, after which we decided to join forces. I always knew that I would need someone with Julian's commercial experience in order to make the most of this kind of business, and Julian knew that he was never going to be a programmer—so we teamed up.

The first project we came up with together was the *DataView* database program, and shortly after we refined it into *DataView Pro.* The rest, as they say, is history.

Things are now going very well and we've got plenty of product ideas, but we obviously have to carefully pick the ones which are most likely to be successful commercially.



FloChart, part of Purple's graphics trilogy

Palmtop: That's the difficult thing, isn't it? So much is already built into the machine that you have to search that little bit harder to find software applications that...

John Holloway: ...That people want to buy, yes. The database is an obvious one. The number of 'professional' companies doing that kind of software for the 3a is very small, and I think we showed Psion that third parties are capable of writing software to the same standard as Psion themselves. With this in mind we then decided to do a Chess game, which was taking on Psion directly as they had already done this themselves for the Series 3. This was a bit of a risk, but we talked to Psion a lot about it, and finally decided to form an informal alliance with Oxford Softworks, who provided the chess engine for our product. As part of that alliance we've now released our own version of Backgammon and Chinese Chess, with a Bridge game coming out very soon.

Palmtop: Games seem to be particularly lucrative for the Psion platform. I get the impression that perhaps many people walk into their High Street Psion outlet, see a game, and just buy it—whereas they may hesitate with something like a database and think to themselves, "Now, what's this all about?" Do you feel that a lot of users are nervous when it comes to something more complex like a database?

Julian Swallow: I think it's really down to universal appeal. You must have a real need to buy a database, whereas games tend to be more of an impulse purchase. Even games have to be carefully selected though, and Purple Software will continue to concentrate on the more challenging titles in this area.

Something both John and I have at the top of our priority list is that if we can't put out a product that contains absolute top quality code with quality packaging and documentation then we aren't prepared to put the Purple Software name on it. For us that is absolutely the number one goal—that our products should all be tip-top quality. Given our position in the industry we are regularly presented with products from other people hoping to have their work published under the Purple Software brand, and I think that where they often fall down is in the quality of their implementation.

Palmtop: What has been the most successful Purple Software product to date?

Julian Swallow: *Chess* has been very successful in terms of volume, and our product became a natural replacement for Psion's original product for the Series 3 Classic. In terms of contribution to the Psion community—taking a more philanthropic view of things—I think *DataView Pro* is the most impressive application I've ever seen for the 3a platform, and we're obviously very proud of it.

Palmtop: How much do you seek council from other people when you're developing software: in terms of features you will include, how the interface will look, etc?

Julian Swallow: We often spend hours discussing how we will implement the features of our products, and a lot of work goes into the whole process.

John Holloway: Most of our registered users send in registration cards to us, and between us we read every single one of those—we always try to get as much feedback as possible when developing a new product. Adding functionality is of course very important, but it becomes difficult at a certain point as large applications can simply consume too much memory when running. Our goal is that anything we release has to run within 100K of RAM. I think that's important.

Palmtop: You've obviously been very busy in recent months bringing a whole raft of new products to market. Do you still have a long list of great applications you plan to write?

Julian Swallow: Yes, it's almost depressing, and we've even given up on lists now because the number of possible projects is so long and some of the ideas are so good, but we know we'll never have the time to get around to all of them.

Palmtop: Will you consider writing for hardware platforms other than the 3a, or do you plan to remain Psion-only?

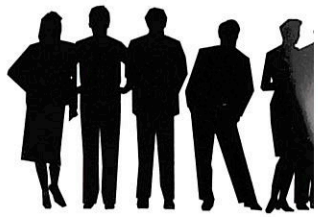
John Holloway: It's certainly something we keep a close watch on, but at the moment Psion are so far ahead (at least in Europe) that there's no point whatsoever in us looking at any of the other platforms. The Psion machines also tend to be much stronger when it comes to localising their machines for use in different countries, so a French 3a has an AZERTY keyboard instead of a QWERTY, and the menus all come up directly in French. Most of the US-based palmtops tend to lack this international appeal. If the right machines come up then we'll certainly look into it though.

Palmtop: So Purple Software is here to stay then, and you have lots of good stuff planned for us users. You are certainly both very upbeat about the whole scene and full of creative ideas.

Julian Swallow: Yes we are, and the calibre of people we're investing in demonstrates our commitment to it. Getting really top quality 'C' programmers is proving extremely difficult for us though. Everything we do is likely to be written in 'C', just from the point of view of speed. The biggest problem when recruiting programmers for the Psion platform is that perhaps 99 percent of the best SIBO C programmers already work for Psion!

Palmtop: Thanks gentlemen, we'll certainly be keeping an eye on future developments from Purple over the coming months...

Do you want to get together?



Psion users in Southern England have got together for a number of informal meetings over the past months. These meetings have so far been held in various pubs around the London area, and have attracted up to 50 or 60 people.

The problem with these meetings is that they are always publicised across the Internet, and anyone without access to that will be unaware of their existence. There may also be readers in other regions or countries who wish to arrange local get-togethers of Psion users, but don't know where to start.

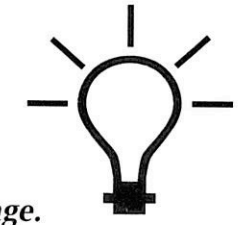
To help make the process a little easier, *Palmtop* is offering to post your requests here in the magazine, so that others can read about it.

Here's the plan:

- As a regular feature we will post details of all known meetings and get-togethers around the world.
- If you want to arrange a meeting in your area (wherever it may be) then you can contact *Palmtop* to have your meeting 'advertised' in the next issue of the magazine.
- If you are interested to arrange a meeting in your area but don't know whether there is likely to be sufficient interest, then contact us and we will tell you the number of *Palmtop* subscribers in your area (though we cannot give out any personal details of other subscribers). This should give you some idea of your likely response.

This service is of course free of charge.

Hints & Tips



More bright ideas to tune up your Psion usage. Nigel Charles wins a free copy of Hugh Johnson's Wine Guide for his pair of useful tips below.

Recovering a lost Psion

My main concern of owning a Psion is the risk of losing it. If it is found by a dishonest person then it is lost forever. However there are still some good people out there who would return it if they could contact the owner. Although the Psion has an owner info slot on the system menu it may not be obvious to the uninitiated. I have decided to put my personal details as entry number one in the address file, as this is more likely to be found with casual use. You have to make sure that your details are in the record which you enter first, or you have to alter all those before it. If your address changes then the entry automatically becomes the last one in the file. Altering several hundred addresses to get your details to the top of the stack is extremely laborious. To overcome this problem I start a new file with my details as the first entry and then merge the existing address file with it. Having checked it has worked I then delete the original address file and then rename the new file as the original.

To grab the attention of the reader I highlight the border of the entry with a selection of symbols such as <<<<< >>>>> and make it clear that I am the owner and would give a reward for its safe return. Just make sure that you complete all of your details before merging otherwise it will drop to the bottom of the pile again.

Nigel Charles
Devizes, Wiltshire

Removing AGENDA clutter

Many of us use AGENDA for a mixture of work and leisure. As there are times when it's useful to view the two separately I have arranged mine so that only work entries are 'timed entries', and the list view is set to display timed entries only.

Any time I wish to review my work schedule I go to the list view. After an item is completed it is changed to an untimed entry which removes it from the list. The quickest way of doing this is to highlight it in any view, press <Enter> twice, direction key once and <Enter> once. It is still present in the day and week views as historical information, and any other entries that need a time attached to them have the time details in the text.

Nigel Charles
Devizes, Wiltshire

The flexible Agenda...

The 3a AGENDA contains several different types of entries for different types of events. One useful feature is that an event can change its type on-the-fly. Here's an example. You're starting your car and notice something that needs to be checked at the next service. You set up a to-do with Priority 9, called 'Car Problems', and describe the problems in an attached note.

As time goes by you add a couple of other things to this note. Finally you decide to book the car in for a service. You change the to-do priority to 1, change the title to 'Phone Dealer', and set up an alarm for the following day. The to-do now appears in all agenda views. When reminded, you call the dealer, and are able to rattle off the outstanding problems. The car is booked in.

You then use PSION-SHIFT-C and change the to-do into a day note, then PSION-SHIFT-M to move the day note to the correct day. You then set the day-note to the correct time, with an alarm in good time for the drive over to the dealer—all of which is considerably easier done than said.

The day comes, the alarm goes off, the car is serviced. You change the title to 'Pick up car', and change the time. When you pick up the car you then have a ready-made list of cured problems to check. Perhaps an extreme example, but it works..!

Stephen Murgan
Louisville, Kentucky, USA

Easy DOS backups!

For PC users still conversant with DOS and RCOM: if you wish to backup the contents of your Psion to a disk on your PC, this can be done most conveniently by the use of the DOS 'XCOPY' command. Not everybody knows this! For instance you might copy the entire contents of your 512K or 1Mb machines to a high density (1.44Mb) floppy disk thus:

1. Insert a floppy disk in drive A: on the PC.
2. Start RCOM on the PC, and the Remote Link on the Psion.
3. On the PC type 'XCOPY i:*.* /s A:' and press <Enter>.

This copies the root directory contents and all subdirectories and their contents to the floppy, creating new directories as needed on the floppy disk as it goes.

In the case of a 2Mb 3a which contains more than 1.4Mb of data, until the arrival of the new high capacity floppies you will have to use the hard disk of the PC—just substitute C: for A: above.

Useful, needing only one command and being less labour intensive than other methods using the DOS 'COPY' command. Can the same be achieved with PsiWin ?

David Aldous
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Novel Banking software use

I keep track of all numerical information in Banker 2.0, not just financial.

For example, I accrue 16 hours of vacation time per month. I have a vacation balance account with an automated transaction that adds 16 hours to the account at the end of each month. When I take a vacation day, I subtract out 8 hours from the account. Since I can't accrue more than 176 hours, I have an alarm that notifies me that I can't add any more time. I also use Banker to track my frequent flyer accounts on different airlines—believe me, these airlines make mistakes all the time. I have a dining discount card that entitles me to a monthly refund on a variety of restaurants. Whenever I eat at these restaurants I enter the refundable amount into the account, then when I get reimbursed I deduct it out of the account.

Miles Taub
Chicago, USA.

Psurfing The Net

What's available for Series 3a users on the Internet

By Pete Sipple

You can't help being swept up by the hype. The Internet is generating a lot of media attention and thousands of new users every week. For the online Series 3a user there's stacks of useful information out there. As we've discussed in previous issues, you need four specific things to access the Internet:

- A telephone line.
- An account with an Internet service provider.
- Appropriate software.
- A computer connected to a modem.

To do the job properly, you need a 'big' computer: a PC, Macintosh, Acorn, etc. Although it's possible to connect with your Psion, it's a tortuous process. Assuming you're on a 'big' computer and signed up with an Internet Service Provider, (such as CompuServe, CiX, Demon, AOL, Pipex, etc), you'll probably have received, and to a greater or lesser degree, be familiar with the software needed to mail, browse, download and surf your way around the Information Superhighway.

If you want to access the Internet from your Psion, you need to look at signing up with CompuServe (worldwide) or CiX (in the UK). ReadCIS and ReadCIX, respectively, are the shareware packages needed to access the 'net through these online services. There are a few other Internet service providers that can help—provided they offer what is known as a text-only VT100 service.

It's worth mentioning that there are some new developments under way to make accessing the Internet from your Series 3a much more viable. The Psion community are eagerly awaiting news of a Psion TCP/IP stack, due for release before the end of the year. TCP/IP is a

protocol used by other computers to allow local software to 'talk' to the Internet host machine. With such a program for the Series 3a, it's theoretically possible to connect through just about any service provider, not just CompuServe and CiX. Enterprising software authors will be working hard to bring us email, web, Usenet and FTP programs once the TCP/IP stack becomes available. An email package from Psion, *PsiMail*, is due any day.

If you have a friend or colleague with Internet access, a new program called 'Websurf' (see *Shareware Shorts* in this issue) will allow you to surf offline on your Psion, with pages saved during a larger computer's online session.

Palmtop will, of course, keep you informed of new developments.

Assuming that you're now online, let's take a look at what's out there:

The World Wide Web (WWW)

Thousands and thousands of pages have been published online about our favourite palmtop. Some are impressive and colourful, some are informative, some are out-of-date, and some are dire. The joy of the WWW is that most pages are linked to other pages. If you don't like what you see, click on another link, and you're somewhere else. One minute you're in Europe, then Australia, then the USA.

►► **Useful Sites** - the top five sites, essential for Series 3a users...

Steve Litchfield's 3-Lib Homepage

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/slitchfield/

This site gets full marks for it's professional look, impressive content and frequency of updates. Steve's pages contain features, news, software reviews and interviews. There's always something new to discover on these pages, making it a vital resource for all Psion Surfers. One especially interesting page is Shareware League: authors are invited to submit the total number of registered users for their software, which are added to a master list. At the time of writing, the league of shareware programs puts the top five programs as: Mapper 3a (S Litchfield), ReadCIS (D Lefebvre and D Keppler), S3aBank (A Richey), Notepad (M Esposito), and Plan (A Clarkson). Steve's *Mapper* Program now has over 1,600 registrations and as you'd expect, the latest version of the software is available from his pages.

Psion Links

http://www.bris.ac.uk/%7Elwmdcg/Psion/

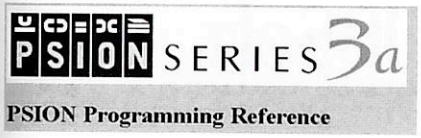
Maintained and updated regularly by Mark Gould, this site contains a link to just about every other Psion related site in the world. If you need to find a site, this is the place to look. All of the links are on one large page, which makes searching quick and easy.

Daniel Pfund's Homepage

http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/

Lots of useful information (particularly the list of Psion Programmers, with its list of programs) plus the author's email and web addresses. Most helpful!

http://www.primate.wisc.edu/people/dubois/psion/oplman/index.html



Another excellent online resource—the OPL Programming Manual, produced by Dave Stafford. Search the manual for that missing command, or take a browse before ploughing into the paper version.

The Psionics File

http://www.cityscape.co.uk/users/cdwf/psion/psionics/

A page of files collated by Clive Feather, which contain unreleased code and structure information on Psion files such as AGN, DBF and SPR. An excellent resource for programmers.

►► **Retailers** - Many leading Psion suppliers have their own pages:

Widget Software Ltd

http://www.widget.co.uk/

This recently revamped site now offers secure online ordering by credit card.

Clove Technology

http://intertrader.com/computers/clove/

Formed in 1992, Clove's monthly special offer and full price list can be found here.

New World Technologies

http://www.nwt.com

A major North American dealer.

►► **Official Sites**

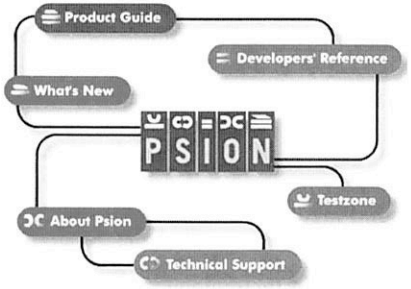
Psion PLC

http://www.psion.com

The long awaited official Psion web site went live on June 17th. The site contains a wealth of information, direct from the

horse's mouth, including press releases, information about the Series 3 range and a page featuring over sixty third party software packages. You'll also find:

- Testzone - an area for non-Series 3a users to download the 3a Emulator.
- Technical Support, with a database holding answers to over 400 Series 3/3a questions, and an online form for submitting technical enquiries.
- A list of distributors and Psion subsidiaries from around the world, and links to other key WWW sites.



Promised for the near future, are 'Helpguides' designed to help you get the most from your machine.

Psion Inc.

http://www.psioninc.com/

An 'official' site from Psion's US arm. This visually pleasing site includes press releases, US price lists and retailers, employment opportunities, email addresses and Psion Developers Partnership.

Psion GmbH

http://emporium.turnpike.net/P/psion-gmbh/

Homepages of the German subsidiary.

Acorn Homepage

http://www.acorn.co.uk/acorn/

Acorn Pocketbook users can access their corporate site. There doesn't seem to be a section dedicated to the *Pocketbook*, but information and press releases appear here.

►► **Software Authors** - Several of the major Internet service providers offer free or cheap space on the web. As a result, WWW pages are not just the domain of large profit makers...

John Boyce's Homepage

JBSoft

http://www.compulink.co.uk/~jbsoft/

Download the latest versions of the JB software range: JBData, JBTree, JBFind, JBLaunch, JBSort, JBBackup.

Rick Andrews

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/chocolate_island_software/

Author of Draw, the shareware bitmap editor.

Mark Esposito, Pelican Software

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/pelican/

Author of Notepad, Banker, BattCheck.

Pete Sipple's Homepage

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/psipple/

Author of BankPlus and KallCost. Ahem... Writer of this article!

***Palmtop*'s own Homepage**

http://members.aol.com/palmtop

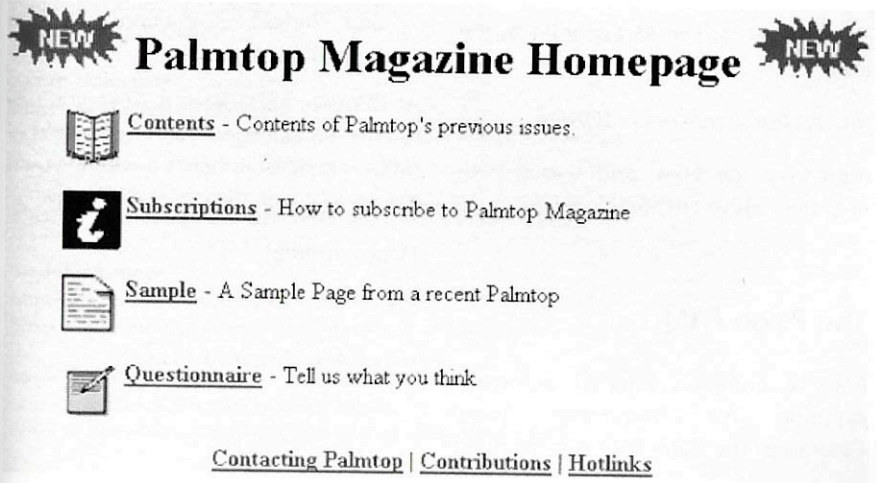
Yes—your favourite magazine is now on the web too. The pages are only a few weeks old, and being added to all the time. At the moment, the pages contain extracts from previous issues, contact information, an online questionnaire and links to other pages. We hope to add some new features soon, including competitions, program listings, and an update on future *Palmtop* issues. Please drop us a note after you've browsed through our pages. As with other web page producers, we value your feedback!

Usenet Newsgroups

Users of the Usenet newsgroups should note that the recently proposed changes have now taken place, and that the old *comp.sys.psion* newsgroup has now been split into more appropriate groups:

comp.sys.psion.announce
comp.sys.psion.apps
comp.sys.psion.marketplace
comp.sys.psion.misc
comp.sys.psion.programmer
comp.sys.psion.reviews

As some news servers take more time than others to integrate new groups, the


NEW
Palmtop Magazine Homepage
NEW
Contents - Contents of Palmtop's previous issues.
Subscriptions - How to subscribe to Palmtop Magazine
Sample - A Sample Page from a recent Palmtop
Questionnaire - Tell us what you think
Contacting Palmtop | Contributions | Hotlinks

comp.sys.psion newsgroup will remain live for several weeks to allow people to make the transition.

Lots and lots of chatter from around the world. Be warned though—anything you say here may end up in our 'On The Net'!

comp.binaries.psion

Psion files which need to be UUdecoded before they can be run. A slightly awkward way of accessing files.

FTP Sites

FTP (File Transfer Protocol) sites are a good central source for downloading shareware. Using an FTP program you can access a huge collection of Psion software. There are two main FTP sites:

ftp://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/packages/psion/icdoc/

(Maintained by Lee McLoughlin in the UK)

ftp://ftp.frontiernet.net/pub/psion

(Run from the USA, and started with help from Steve Litchfield's *3-Lib).*

The Psion FAQ

FAQ, a common Internet acronym, standing for *Frequently Asked Questions*. The Psion FAQ is maintained by Daniel Pfund, and contains lots of answers, useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers. Every Psion owner should have one! The FAQ is available from several places—but look out for an up-to-date version:

- An online version of the FAQ can be accessed from Mark Gould's WWW site at: *http://www.bris.ac.uk/%7Elwmdcg/Psion/FAQ/*
- The FAQ is posted on a monthly basis to the Psion Usenet newsgroup.
- It is available for FTP download from one of the many *news.answer* archive sites, such as *rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/*
- If you only have email access to the 'net, you can request a version of the FAQ by sending an email message to *mail-server@rtfm.mit.edu* with the message containing the words "help" and "index" . Instructions will then be mailed to you.

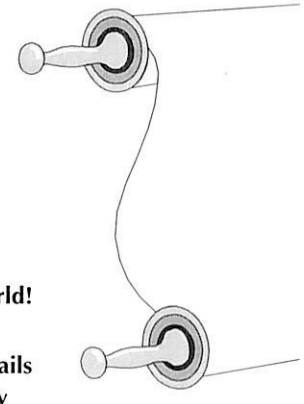
At *Palmtop*, we're keen to keep you up-to-date with developments in the field of online services. If there's anything you'd like us to cover, please let me know.

Happy surfing!

Pete

psipple@cix.compulink.co.uk

The Psion Reference



A new regular feature—useful details on what's hot in the Psion World!

If you would like to be included in the list then please send details directly to *Palmtop* for free inclusion in our important new directory

Official World Wide Web Sites

Psion UK plc
http://www.psion.com/
The Psion plc (UK) site

Psion Inc.
http://www.psioninc.com/
Psion Inc (USA) - Press releases, price lists and retailers.

Psion GmbH
http://emporium.turnpike.net/P/psion-gmbh/
Psion GmbH (Germany)

Acorn Homepage
http://www.acorn.co.uk/acorn/
Acorn Pocketbook users can access information and press releases.

Psion Resources on the World Wide Web

3-Lib Homepage
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/slitchfield/
Shareware, features, news, software reviews and interviews

Mark Gould's Psion Links
http://www.bris.ac.uk/%7Elwmdcg/Psion/
Links to just about any other Psion related site in the world

Palmtop's own Homepage
http://members.aol.com/palmtop/
Information on all aspects of the Palmtop Magazine

Psion Online OPL Manual
http://www.primate.wisc.edu/people/dubois/psion/oplman/
Search or browse the online OPL Programming Manual

Psion Programmers
http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/prgers.htm
List of software authors, programs, email and web addresses.

The Psionics File
http://www.cityscape.co.uk/users/cdwf/psion/psionics/
Files containing structure information on Psion files such as AGN, DBF and SPR.

Psion Retailers

Clove Technology (UK) tel: +44 (0)1202 302796
http://intertrader.com/computers/clove/

New World Technologies (USA) tel: +1 212 941 4633
http://www.nwt.com

Viking Computers (UK) tel: +44 (0)1603 425209
http://www.u-net.com/~vikingc/psion3a.htm

Widget Software Ltd (UK) tel: +44 (0)1438 815444
http://www.widget.co.uk/

Software Authors

Rick Andrews
http://ourworld.compuserve.com:80/homepages/chocolate_island_software
Draw

Mark Avey
http://ourworld.compuserve.com:80/homepages/groucho/
HangMan, CallCalc, I Ching and CrosWord

John Boyce
http://www.compulink.co.uk/~jbsoft/
JBData, JBTree, JBFind, JBLaunch, JBSort, JBBackup & JBDial

Andy Clarkson
http://ourworld.compuserve.com:80/homepages/andyc
OPP & Plan

David Clifton
http://www.earthnet.net/~eieio/
SpyderX, Spyder9 & SpyderT

Nick Dawkins
http://www.pavilion.co.uk/users/ndawkins/
Dungeon

Mark Esposito, Pelican Software
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/pelican/
Notepad, Banker, BattCheck

David Joyce
http://www.compulink.co.uk/~djoyce/
MemoVoc

Thomas Lansing
http://www.innomate.de/lansys/psioman/
PsioMan

Steve Litchfield
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/slitchfield/
Mapper, Mapper London

Matt Millar
http://www.compulink.co.uk/~windmill/
Backgammon

Mobile Pages
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mobile_pages
Database specialists for corporate and personal use

Roger Muggleton
http://ourworld.compuserve.com:80/homepages/g0hzk
Pocket Packet

Daniel Pfund
http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/
DPBank, DPSwitch, Splitz

Alan Richey
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/alanrichey/
S3Abank, S3Adraw & S3ACollect

Richard Schmidt
http://www.worldonline.nl/~rschmidt/
Calc3a, Worklog, Trips3a

Pete Sipple
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/psipple
BankPlus and KallCost

Matt Thomas
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/matt_thomas/
League Lexicon, Lottery Lexicon & Quiz Lexicon

Symantec
http://www.symantec.com/compinfo/news/products/actpispr.html
Act!

Simon Webb
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/swebb/
Tube

John Whiting
http://dialspace.dial.pipex.com/john.whiting/
Agenda Link

Discussion Groups

UseNet Groups

comp.sys.psion.announce *comp.sys.psion.apps* *comp.sys.psion.marketplace*
comp.sys.psion.misc *comp.sys.psion.programmer* *comp.sys.psion.reviews*

(See page 83 for more details of the recent changes in this area)

CompuServe Psion discussion
Palmtop A

CiX Psion conference
Psion

Palmtop Magazine discussion
palmtop_mag conference

AOL - Psion Noticeboard
Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion

Psion Software

Imperial Archive FTP Site
ftp://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/packages/psion/icdoc/

Frontiernet FTP Site
ftp://ftp.frontiernet.net/pub/psion

Usenet Binary Group
comp.binaries.psion

CompuServe Psion files area
Palmtop A forum

CiX Psion files area
Psion conference

Psion FAQ

The Frequently Asked Questions document contains useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

Posted monthly to the comp.sys.psion groups.

Available for FTP download from news.answers FTP sites, including rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/

An online version can be accessed from http://www.bris.ac.uk/%7Elwmdcg/Psion/FAQ/

Available by email. Send an email message to mail-server@rtfm.mit.edu with the message containing the words "help" and "index" . Instructions will then be mailed to you.

Other Sites

Digital Vision Magazine (Chinese)
http://www.hkstar.com/~micro/

Japanese Psion Page
http://www.cent.saitama-u.ac.jp/~masaaki/psion/

Psion Club Series 3 (France)
http://alex.union-fin.fr/usr/dcabuzel/psion/clubpsion.html

Psion Profil (Hungary)
http://www.datanet.hu/internetto/ads/psion/

WAVE Publishing (Germany)
http://www.wave.cube.net/

The Floppy Disk Storage Solution

Cyclone

Purple Software

Purple Software Limited
PO Box 7535, London, NW1 6AT England
Tel: +44 (0)171 387 7777 Fax: +44 (0)171 387 1188
e-mail: purplesoft@cix.compulink.co.uk
or 100526.3715@compuserve.com

Features and Benefits

- Durable housing ideal for mobile use.
- Uses standard, low-cost 720K and 1.44Mb PC floppy diskettes.
- Transfer diskettes between your Cyclone drive and your PC.
- Appears simply as drive C to all your Psion applications.
- Works with all software that adheres to Psion standards.
- Back-up your files speedily and at a fraction of the cost compared with Flash SSDs.
- Save money by buying your Psion applications on floppy diskette.
- Includes the renowned File Manager software.
- Compatible with the Psion Work*About*.
- Powered by 5 AA cells or mains adapter (not supplied).
- Dimensions: 240mm long, 105mm wide, 30mm high.
- Price £169.95 inc. VAT plus p&p.

POS Ltd

Pinnock Organiser Services offer you speedy and convenient service and repairs for your Psion machines and accessories. We are authourised by Psion and aim to provide the highest standards of service. Post your items to us with payment for return in 3 days or visit us by appointment. The standard service costs just £35.

PINNOCK ORGANISER SERVICES

Think Psion, Think P.O.S.itive

APPROVED PSION Service Centre

25 Leigham Avenue Streatham, London SW16 2PR ☎: 0181 677 9246
mobile: 0831 194985 email: 106051.2651@compuserve.com

Take

The Mobile Pages Challenge!

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mobile_pages

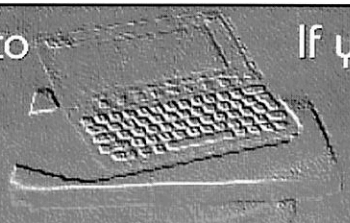
or

Request an information pack in 0181-906-0002 or by sending an email to sballan@cix.compulink.co.uk

Mobile Software

"What you want, when & where you want it"

If you want to save time and money



If you want the very latest & very best

the place for shareware and freeware is

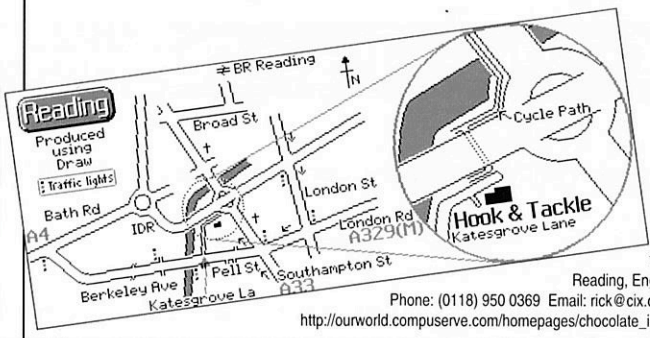
The 3-Lib library on 0 1734 265081

22 Grays Crescent, Woodley, Reading RG5 3EN

For a free comprehensive catalogue,
send stamped self-addressed A5 envelope plus an extra first class stamp

DRAW

Chocolate Island Software



For more info, please contact:
Rick Andrews
16 Alpine Street
Reading, England RG1 2QA
Phone: (0118) 950 0369 Email: rick@cix.compulink.co.uk
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/chocolate_island_software/

- The best-selling shareware bitmap editor for the Psion Series 3a - only £10
- Real-time Zoom, Pattern fill, Variable width lines, Undo and more
- Print to Epson, IBM, Canon and HP printers

CLOVE TECHNOLOGY

Specialist
PSION
Dealer

We specialise in Psion and carry the range of machines, software and accessories at competitive prices.

All our machines come fully tested with both sets of batteries installed, together with some additional utility software free of charge.

We can deliver most items next day in the UK and deliver all over the world.

Phone us or visit our World Wide Web page to get a complete product listing.

Clove Technology

Friendly, informed service at good prices-we try just that little bit harder !

CLOVE TECHNOLOGY

☎ 01202 302796

Fax 01202 300419

WWW - http://intertrader.com/computers/clove/

43 Springbank Road
Bournemouth
BH7 7EL

Email: 100255.3642
@compuserve.com

VISA Memory cards PSION & Upgrades MasterCard

RAM CARDS 2Mb £470 4Mb £780 **FLASH CARDS 8Mb £545**

If you would rather upgrade your existing Psion SSD, the following options are available:

RAM UPGRADES

128k » 256k	£95
128k » 512k	£220
512k » 1 Mb	£187
512k » 2 Mb	£364
512k » 4 Mb	£717

All these products carry a one year parts & labour guarantee, and are 100% compatible!

FLASH UPGRADES

128k » 256k	£37	2 Mb » 4 Mb	£194
128k » 512k	£80	1 Mb » 4 Mb	£235
128k » 1 Mb	£95	4 Mb » 8 Mb	£317
512k » 1 Mb	£68	2 Mb » 8 Mb	£399
1 Mb » 2 Mb	£114	1 Mb » 8 Mb	£437

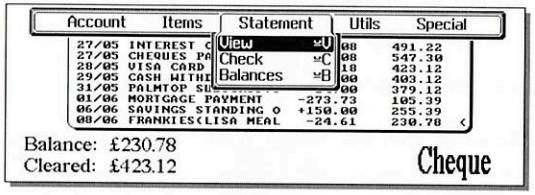
All prices include VAT (@ 17.5%) and UK postage

We ship worldwide - please enquire for tax free prices and shipping/DHL/Fedex rates

Exportech, P.O. Box 4499, London SW17 8XQ, England.
Open 8.30am - 10pm every Monday, 8.30am - 5.30pm Tuesday to Friday
Tel: 0181 682 3313 Fax: 0181 682 4414 CompuServe: 100121,1165
The Psion name and logo are registered trade marks of Psion plc, and are fully acknowledged

BankPlus

The Series 3a Bank Account Manager



- Small and easy to use
- Handles up to eight different accounts
- Pays standing orders automatically
- Keep a check on bank and credit card accounts.

BankPlus is the simple way to keep your bank and credit card statements in order and make sure your accounts stay in the black. ***BankPlus*** costs just £6 (incl. p&p) on 3.5" disk. Send a cheque or your credit card details to: Pete Sipple, 51 Eastwood Boulevard, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 0BY

The shareware version is freely available from usual sources.
Email *psipple@cix.compulink.co.uk* for details, or download the latest version from *http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/psipple/bankplus.htm*

SHARK A TAX calculates or checks your Income Tax and National Insurance Class 4 Liability.
SHARK A TAX is a Tax Calculation Spreadsheet template.
SHARK A TAX allows "what if" calculations, for example, what if I reduce my Building Society interest or claim more Capital Allowances.
SHARK A TAX will be updated every Tax Year.
SHARK A TAX is reasonably priced—from only £20.

—runs on any Series 3 or 3a spreadsheet—

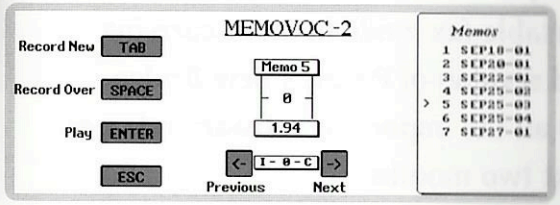
Further details from
SHARK A TAX,
Broadway,
Llangain,
Carmarthen,
SA33 SAN.
Tel: (01267) 241443

SHARK A TAX

Quality Psion Shareware from David Joyce

Memovoc-2 - a voice memo manager for the Psion 3a

Memovoc-2 makes speech input to the Psion quick and convenient, allowing for easy recording and playback of voice memos using single keystrokes. It's for people who need to take notes at meetings or while reading a document, but who don't want to interrupt what they are doing to jot them down. Instead—simply speak into the Psion!



Only £10 (UK) or $15 (US) for registered version

"Overall, this is a well finished program which adds considerably to the usefulness of the Psion"
- Irish Times, Jan 96

"Thank you for sending Memovoc-2, which is excellent"
- Dr Tom Stoneham, Philosophy Lecturer, Oxford University.

"Since loading it on my 3a I have found it invaluable"
- Mr David Wade, Quality Assurance Manager, Bradford.

Contact: David Joyce,
2 Seabury Parade, Malahide,
County Dublin, IRELAND
Email: djoyce@cix.compulink.co.uk
Voicemail: +353 1 7116301

Next Issue...

Planned for issue 8:

- Postponed from this issue due to lack of space—the mega-review of every major personal finance package.

- Exchanging data between spreadsheets and databases on your 3a, and importing data from desktop computers. All is explained.

- GPS on your Psion. The fascinating technology of Global Positioning Systems and how to use it with a 3a.

- A full in-depth test of the Cyclone disk drive, a neat portable fax modem, more carrying cases, and reviews of Purple's new Bridge game and all the important software releases of the next two months.

- Psion's new Agenda Synchroniser and Widget Software's forthcoming Agenda Link upgrade.

- All in an even bigger and better 104 pages+